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HYACINTHE;

OR,

THE CONTRAST.

BY MRS. GREY,

AUTHOR OF "ALICE SEYMOUR," THE "BELLE OF THE
FAMILY," "THE GAMBLER'S WIFE."

"What is our duty here? to tend
From good to better—thence to best;
Grateful to drink life's cup,—then bend
Unmurmuring to our bed of rest."

LONDON:
T. C. NEWBY, 72, MORTIMER STREET.
1845.



HYACINTHE;

OR,

THE CONTRAST.

CHAPTER I.

' O friendly to the best pursuits of man,
Friendly to thought, to virtue, and to peace,
Domestic life in rural pleasure pass'd !'

IN a retired village in Monmouthshire lived Farmer Wilmot and his wife. They were industrious, worthy people, and resided on a neat little farm, which was at once their means of subsistence, and a constant source of occupation and pleasure.

Although their resources were very limited, their wants were proportionably small, for children were not among the blessings which had been bestowed upon them ; and this was a drawback to their happiness ; as although, had they been possessed of offspring, their labours must have been much heavier, and many a hard strug-

gle would they have had to support a family ; still regrets would mingle themselves with those feelings of gratitude with which they viewed their peaceful situation, and all the tranquil happiness it afforded them. Placed in a sphere of life, where the world, and what is falsely termed the world's pleasures, fail to fix and captivate the mind, the heart looks with more ardent longing for those objects of natural affection on which to lavish that tenderness and love inherent in every virtuous bosom ; and it was with many a sigh that Jane Wilmot contemplated the blooming children of her neighbours ; at times inwardly exclaiming, ' Oh ! if it had pleased God to have blessed me with a child, what happiness it would have been to me, to have worked—to have toiled unceasingly for it ; no exertion, no labour could have been irksome with so dear an inducement !'

However, notwithstanding these occasional murmurs, Jane Wilmot was too right-minded and pious to give way to a spirit of repining at the divine will of Him who appoints all things ; she felt that every event was arranged by an Almighty hand, and therefore submitted to her fate with cheerful meekness, recalling to her thoughts, with gratitude, the many blessings she already en-

joyed. Indeed, she was a happy woman ; happy in the possession of an excellent husband, with good health and strength to assist them in their labours ; and, although they were poor, hitherto they had never been in need.

Jane Wilmot had formerly been in the service of a lady of high consideration, on whom it was her peculiar duty to attend ; besides being employed in offices, which evinced the confidence her integrity merited. Her good qualities had quickly gained for her the esteem of her mistress, who manifested the interest she had excited by zealously seeking to improve the natural intelligence of her mind ; and by inculcating those precepts of religion and piety without which she well knew her mental acquirements would be unprofitable. This excellent lady died very suddenly, and Jane was thus deprived of a sincere and valuable friend. James Wilmot had been many years her fellow-servant, and an attachment had long subsisted between them.

A legacy to each from their late mistress, and some savings of their own, enabled them to marry ; and, having stocked a small farm, though in a very limited manner, by unceasing industry and good behaviour this worthy couple contrived to live on with tolerable comfort and success.

Jane and her husband were always neat and respectable in their appearance, while their house, by its order and cleanliness, equally betokened the propriety of their ideas. The little garden surrounding their dwelling, arranged with the taste they had not failed to acquire in the service of their refined and lamented mistress, was a perfect paradise of sweets; and it was their dearest recreation to work in it, or with honest pride to display their garden treasures to their kind friend and frequent visitor, Mr. Neville, the clergyman of the parish.

The village of Fairbrook was particularly favoured in having for its pastor such a man as Mr. Neville, to whom his parishioners were his dearest objects of interest—their welfare, his heart's most fervent desire; and, while he sought by the earnestness of his precepts so to enlighten their minds and sanctify their feelings, that they might taste of that happiness which the world can neither give nor take away, he was not unmindful of their temporal concerns; and, with the advice his superior intelligence enabled him to afford, and the pecuniary assistance a well-economized income left at his disposal, he rescued many a grateful villager from the embarrassments incidental to an agricultural life.

Farmer Wilmot and his wife were perhaps the two persons of his humble flock for whom he felt the liveliest interest ; for it rejoiced his kind heart to witness such real worth—such true and simple piety : and after he had visited them in their quiet and pleasant dwelling, he would return home with that pleasurable feeling in his bosom, which a good man feels in witnessing conduct so praiseworthy, and hearts so pure.

Jane Wilmot was loved throughout the village ; and even the envy which at times finds a shelter in the breast of the rustic as of the courtier, was hushed and tongue-tied by her unfailing kindness and unassuming manners. Her love for children led her most frequently to those houses of her neighbours that were inhabited by those endearing beings, which her own heart told her every virtuous mother must regard as blessings. Attached by her tenderness, every child loved her ; and if sickness attacked any of them, Jane was always to be found by the sufferer's bed, assisting the mother and acting as the nurse. Farmer Wilmot used sometimes almost to chide her for thus spending so much of her time ; and would good-naturedly reproach her for employments which he fancied must take her from necessary occupations at home : but she would

always stop his chidings by saying, 'Oh ! James, you must only scold me when you find that I have neglected one single duty :' and so scrupulous was she in fulfilling them all, that he was immediately silenced ; and only stifled a feeling of regret that the child upon whom she lavished her caresses was not her own.

CHAPTER II.

‘ I see a column of slow rising smoke
 O’ertop the lofty wood, that skirts the wild.
 A vagabond and useless tribe there eat
 Their miserable meal.’ * *

CLOSE to the farm which Farmer Wilmot rented was a long and retired lane. It was, unfortunately for him, the resort of gangs of gipsies, and many were the petty depredations which they committed on his property. However, so generally kind and humane was the farmer known to be, that perhaps he escaped better than his neighbours; for even these lawless people in a manner respected him; and farther than trifling misdemeanours, he had not much to complain of. He thought that as a Christian, it was his duty to be kind to every fellow-creature, however weak and erring; it was not for him to turn his back upon the frail; and, pitying the condition of these miserable people, he never wantonly persecuted them, and even occasionally assisted them

by allowing them to mend his kitchen utensils, buying from them baskets or mats, and shewing much benevolent consideration should sickness have overtaken any of the gang.

One day as Jane Wilmot was returning home from taking a basket of fresh-laid eggs to a gentleman's house, whose park-gates were situated not very far from the extremity of the lane, her attention was attracted by a spectacle which greatly shocked her kind heart. A troop of gipsies had lately encamped in the lane; and the rough covering to a wretched hovel which had been hastily erected, was drawn aside, with the view, it appeared, of giving air to an apparently dying female, to whom the extreme sultriness of the day seemed to give additional cause of suffering.

Mrs. Wilmot drew near, and asked some questions of an old crone, who was bending over the afflicted creature, and learnt that the sick woman was in the last stage of a decline, which was the reason of the sudden halt of the gang, as it was supposed not many hours could elapse before she breathed her last.

Jane beheld with much emotion a little child, apparently about three years old, who was crouching close to the dying woman. The infant was

pale and thin, but its beauty was still most striking, as it turned its large black eyes with shrinking fear upon the admiring Mrs. Wilmot. Clusters of dark curling hair hung over, and formed almost her only covering; while her delicately formed mouth, with a rosy under-lip as yet unfaded by famine, completed the singular loveliness of infantile attraction.

‘What a beautiful creature!’ exclaimed Mrs. Wilmot, most intently observing the child—
‘will her father take care of her when her mother is dead?’

‘As for that matter,’ answered the old woman, ‘I don’t much know. I wish the useless little baggage might die with the woman, for the good it will be to us :—get along, you nasty cross brat,’ pursued the hag, giving the poor babe a kick; for it had begun to cry, probably suffering from hunger—‘I wish our eyes had never lighted upon you, for you have never been much profit or pleasure.’

‘Poor miserable little creature!’ exclaimed Jane, taking the little girl into her arms, and tenderly looking at her; ‘how I pity you!—what would I give to take you home with me, and be henceforth a mother to you!’

The child, attracted by her gentleness and mild

countenance, laid its head upon her shoulder ; and when Jane wished to put her down, in order that she might return home, clung to her and wept bitterly.

Jane mingled tears with hers, and could not repress them during her walk home. The image of the poor ill-treated child was before her eyes, and when she met her husband, she told her story in most pathetic terms, adding—‘ The idea of the treatment this poor baby will receive when her mother is dead really distracts me. Oh ! James, if you could but see what an interesting lovely creature she is ! ’

Farmer Wilmot, who always sympathized in his wife's feelings, promised to accompany her to the lane, and to endeavour to ascertain whether the father of the child was equally devoid of humanity or tenderness as the old gipsy, which there was too much reason to apprehend ; and in the evening they sallied forth, taking with them some gruel and other comforts for the sick woman.

When they drew near, several of the gang were sitting round their evening repast, consisting of poultry,—it was not unreasonable to consider as the spoil stolen the previous night from some neighbouring hen-roost. They were ferocious-

looking beings, and Jane shuddered as she approached them. She inquired respecting the sick woman, and was told that 'she was as bad as she could be.' They drew near the wretched pallet, which had been formed for her with straw covered with a few dirty rags. Death was visible upon the countenance of the sufferer. The little girl was fast asleep, her head resting upon the lap of her mother. A heated flush animated her pale cheeks; her beautiful ringlets nature had arranged with the truest grace about her forehead; her long dark eyelashes were fringed with tears; and as she lay, one little bare shoulder bore the marks of rude violence, being bruised, as if a heavy hand had roughly used it.

Jane pointed to the child, and the farmer was almost as much affected as his weeping wife.

The dying woman lay apart from the rest of the gipsy group, and Jane and her husband found themselves alone with her.

She looked at them, and motioned with her hand for Jane to stoop down, that she might speak to her. Jane knelt by her side—death is always awful to the beholder, and she felt that now she saw it surrounded by all its worst horrors—a soul about to take its departure from this earth under such circumstances! Where

was the hope that supports the Christian?—alas! not here. In darkness the unfortunate woman had lived—in darkness she must die!

The dying gipsy whispered in low broken phrases, ‘That poor child—what will become of it when I am dead?—they will want to get rid of it—perhaps murder it—she has no father here—Brian hates it. He says the child may get him hanged—he stole it—’ Here her words were interrupted by a dreadful spasm suddenly seizing her.

Jane called for help, and in one minute the gipsies surrounded the woman; but she was dead! They suddenly grasped the child, and threw it at a distance: Jane could contain herself no longer.

‘Give me the child,’ she cried in agony; and turning to her husband, with streaming eyes and supplicating action, she sobbed, ‘Oh! my dear husband, let me take her home, and be a mother to her. We may be certain the Almighty will bless our undertaking. Consider the happiness of saving perhaps a soul from everlasting destruction. What will be the fate of the poor infant if she is left with these dreadful people? If her life be spared, how will she be brought up? Poor innocent babe, she will be taught to be

wicked ; and I am sure from her sweet countenance she is not so by nature. Do, dear James, grant my request. We shall never miss the little she will cost us. Oh ! no ; God will assist us, and this act of humanity will increase rather than diminish our means. Do not hesitate—shall we offer to take her ?’

James looked grave and irresolute ; he longed to grant his wife’s request, and yet he felt that they were about to take upon themselves a heavy responsibility.

‘ I wish,’ he said, ‘ we could first consult Mr. Neville.’

‘ Well, go, dear husband, and ask his advice,’ Jane replied quickly, sanguine as to the results ; ‘ I will remain by the child until you return—but pray do not be long, for I tremble at the looks of these terrible people.’ She then seated herself apart from the gipsies, and, taking the poor little girl in her arms, lulled it again to rest.

The gipsies were busying themselves about the corpse of the dead woman ; and seeing that Mrs. Wilmot, far from watching them, was heedless of their proceedings, while centering all her attention in the child she held, they allowed her to remain in tranquillity until her husband returned, accompanied by Mr. Neville.

CHAPTER III.

‘ There are these angels sent by heaven to guide
Our earthly barks through time’s deceitful tide ;
Faith, Hope, and Charity—benignant three !
Charity fairest—follow Charity !’

JAMES WILMOT found Mr. Neville disengaged, and, in much haste and agitation, told him the purport of his visit. This excellent man was much interested by the account he gave of the destitute situation of the child, and willingly accompanied him to the lane, where they found Jane, with the poor baby asleep upon her knee.

Mr. Neville was struck with the beauty of the little girl, and equally shocked by her emaciated and neglected appearance. Jane renewed her entreaties that she might be allowed to take charge of her ; and so earnest were her solicitations, that Mr. Neville joined with her in hoping that James would yield to her wishes. It was no difficult matter to obtain his hearty concurrence in the benevolent plan ; for from the first his

heart inclined to it, although a fear that the step might not be a prudent one had for a moment made him hesitate. They had now only to speak to the gipsies.

Mr. Neville requested the father of the child to approach them: a man of a most ferocious appearance came reluctantly forward.

‘ You are the father of this child ? ’ inquired Mr. Neville.—‘ May be I am,’ gruffly replied the man ; ‘ bad luck to me ! ’ ‘ Will you object to part with her, and allow this good woman to take charge of her, and bring her up as her own child ? ’ continued Mr. Neville, while Jane waited in dreadful suspense for the reply of the brutal gipsy.—‘ Ay, and thank her too ; but—’ hesitated the ruffian, ‘ I must have my price for her: the little good-for-nought should bring me some price for the trouble she’s been to my dead missis there.’

Mr. Neville, thoroughly disgusted, and more than ever anxious to take the child out of such hands, offered him a sovereign ; and telling the man that he did not intend to give him any more, desired Mrs. Wilmot to go home with her charge ;—an order she with the most heartfelt joy obeyed ; and pressing the sleeping treasure to her bosom, she with rapid steps had nearly

reached the farm, when she was joined by a young gipsy girl, who, out of breath, begged her for an instant to stop.

‘ Oh ! ma’am, I have run so fast, just to ask you to let me have one more look at poor little May. I heard you were taking her away ; and, poor heart, I am the only one in the world who ever was kind to her.’

Mrs. Wilmot willingly paused, and the good-natured looking gipsy girl affectionately kissed the sleeping child. ‘ Ah ! poor May,’ she said, ‘ a hard life you have had ; and I am glad you have found a kind friend. Good bye—good bye’—and, again kissing her, she wiped a tear, which the parting seemed to call to her bright black eyes, and ran back to join her companions.

Mr. Neville remained still with the gipsy group to give further orders. He desired them peremptorily to leave the neighbourhood by the morning, promising to defray all expenses of the funeral if they would decamp without delay.

The carpenter of the village speedily constructed a shell for the body of the deceased woman, which was conveyed to the poor-house, and by the next morning the gipsy tribe had finally departed.

On Jane Wilmot reaching her home, the little

girl, whom we shall now call 'May,' awaking from her deep sleep, opened her large dark eyes, and gazed fearfully around her. Her first impulse was to cry; but the mild, kind looks which met her timid glances, almost immediately checked her grief; and a nice basin of bread and milk, which her new protectress had prepared for her, was devoured by the poor famished babe with the utmost eagerness.

Jane then hastened to take off the filthy rags with which poor May's emaciated body was scantily clothed, with some little reluctance cut off the thick and matted curls which covered her head, and then washed her completely with warm water; and so gently and kindly did she perform this office, that the child, though evidently unaccustomed to such a process, submitted to it without murmuring.

Many tears did Jane shed when she saw the pitiable state of the poor child's body, as, added to filth and neglect, evident marks of savage treatment were to be discovered. She was almost crippled from ill usage, while her little form, thin and wretched in the extreme, was covered with innumerable scars, which, though slight, bore sad evidence of the cruelty she had undergone: however, one scar on her forehead

seemed to attest greater barbarity than all the rest, and had been apparently inflicted by some sharp instrument ; for although it was easily perceptible that the wound had been made some length of time back, still it was so indelible as to promise to accompany her down to the grave : —a grave Jane almost feared her fragile charge could scarcely be long preserved from.

‘ Poor darling child ! what have you suffered ! —Did they beat you very hard ? ’ she inquired of the child ; who replied, looking round as if she almost anticipated the repetition of their savage treatment, ‘ Oh yes ; beat me, and kicked me ; nobody loved me but mammy a little, and brown Bet.’

After the child was made thoroughly clean and comfortable, Jane placed her in a little bed, which she had made close to her own. It was quite a matter of surprise to see how immediately the little girl conformed herself as it were to her new position. She seemed as if renewing old habits, instead of acquiring new. A sweet happy smile was on her countenance when Jane kissed her, and laid her down ; and the beauty of the expression of her features when she fell asleep, lighted up by that bright flush which generally accompanies the slumber of children,

can only be imagined by those who have gazed on that most touching sight, the heavenly tranquil sleep of a lovely child.

Jane hung over her in silent rapture, and on her knees implored that a blessing might be vouchsafed on her by that gracious God, whose property is ever to have mercy. She prayed also that her undertaking might be sanctified by His Almighty protection, and that the little destitute girl might grow up to be an honour to the holy name of Christian, and thus form the pride and happiness of her adopted parents.

After this pious duty was performed, Mrs. Wilmot's thoughts again turned to the temporal necessity of her charge, and she began to reflect how she should clothe her new-found daughter. As for the rags which had partially covered her, they had been immediately consigned to the fire. Whilst she was considering which of her own garments she should cut up to furnish clothing for little May, she heard a gentle tap at the door, and soon beheld the welcome form of Mr. Neville, accompanied by his sister, Mrs. Villars.

They came laden with two complete suits for the little stranger, of which they always kept a store for the village children. Jane conducted her visitors to the bedside of the child, and felt

happy in perceiving they were equally moved and interested as herself by the appearance of the sleeping babe.

Her brother had told Mrs. Villars of the wretched plight in which the infant had been found ; and on seeing its present peaceful and improved state, she could not resist taking the hand of the excellent Jane and offering commendations for that active charity which, under the blessing of her God, had taught her thus to rescue a suffering fellow-creature from a condition of hopeless misery.

CHAPTER IV.

‘ Though I could read the books of prophecy,
Withdraw the veil of heavenly mystery ; †
Though Science led me through her various way,
And I had power, power from above to say,
‘ Remove, thou mountain :’—this were nought, and I
An useless nothing, without Charity.’

As the whole transactions, related in the foregoing chapter, had taken place in so short a time, and as no one, but the persons already mentioned, knew anything of the circumstances attending the manner in which little May became domesticated in the family of Farmer Wilmot, Mr. Neville and his sister considered that it would be advisable to keep the details concerning it as quiet as possible.

The Wilmots lived very much to themselves ; never entered into the gossip of the village, and had few intimate friends ; therefore they hoped to escape without many questions ; and it was agreed that they should merely say, with reference

to May, that they had adopted her; determining to decline all other explanation, should farther inquiries be made.

Of course rumour and curiosity were busy for some little time, and many were the conjectures formed upon the mysterious arrival of our little heroine: however, it proved like all other novelities, a 'nine days' wonder,' and finding that no light was thrown upon the matter, surmise at length wore itself out, and the Wilmots were left in peaceful enjoyment of their newly-acquired child.

Every day inspired these good people with more love for this little foundling; the sweetness of her disposition developing itself, in proportion as confidence and happiness dawned upon her feelings.

At first she was timid and shrinking to a fearful excess, and weakness and fever, brought on evidently by neglect, made her ill and low-spirited; but kindness and cleanliness soon brought the roses into her pale cheeks; her beautiful eyes began to beam with happiness, and her lovely hair growing again in clustering ringlets, rendered her beauty of a character almost unearthly.

Jane watched her returning health with the

anxiety of a mother ; and indeed no mother could be more adored by her child than she was by little May : it appeared as if all the affection of her nature was brought forth by the warm beams of kindness which emanated from the benevolent countenance of Mrs. Wilmot, who, indulging in all the endearing tenderness to childhood, so natural to her bosom, and which was rendered still more active by the recollection of what she had rescued her from, felt a happiness of which she could have formed no previous conception.

What a beatified virtue is benevolence !—It is a precious tie existing between man and man as children of one common father,—a tie wholly unaffected by difference of age, station, kindred, or country, and over which the artificial distinctions of a vain world have little power. If we consider our blessed Lord simply in his human character, how bright—how lovely and engaging does this particular virtue appear ! And when contemplating, with adoring veneration, the tenderness of His compassion—the activity of His benevolence, let it be remembered that these are *imitable* virtues. We cannot, like Him, recall the fleeting soul to its earthly tabernacle ; we cannot say to the angry wave, ‘ Peace, be still !’

but we may all cheer, and soothe, and be kind one to another.

Jane had ever acted the part of the good Samaritan, and now she reaped the reward of her habitual charity, for every morning she rose with greater alacrity and happiness. She had indeed, now an incitement to exertion ; and what a real interest she felt in possessing a child which in every respect seemed to her maternal bosom all her own ! Kind as her husband was upon the occasion, she was sensible she ought to strive never to let him find that her precious May was ever an incumbrance to him ; therefore with increased diligence and exactitude she laboured in the performance of every duty. She counted too with greater eagerness her eggs, watched with an anxious eye the well-doing of her poultry, beheld with gladness the rich milk yielded by her cows, and was more than ever desirous that her butter should be of the finest quality. She always found a ready sale for these articles at the Hall, as the housekeeper declared that Mrs. Wilmot was the cleanest and most honest dealer who ever approached the house.

It was from the Hall also that Jane had occasionally been supplied with needlework, and she now anxiously inquired for further employment of that nature.

‘How is it,’ said Mrs. Smith, ‘that you are so very desirous for work?—I hope you are doing well at home?’

‘O yes, thank you, ma’am,’ Jane replied, slightly blushing at the housekeeper’s remark; ‘every thing goes on as well as our hearts could wish; but we have taken charge of a little girl, and I feel that I ought now to work more than I used to do, when we had no one to think of but ourselves.’

The hint was sufficient for the good woman. She made interest with the ladies’ maids, and work poured in upon Jane from many quarters, so that every Saturday night she returned home from the Hall with a little treasure, which she with joyful pride counted out before her husband, whose kind and honest heart glowed with satisfaction and gratitude in the possession of so excellent a wife, while he rendered her equally happy by evincing as tender an interest in their pretty charge as occupied her own affectionate bosom.

CHAPTER V.

'Tis sweet, in journeying through this vale of tears,
To gather its fair flowers ; to pay and prove
Blessings and sympathies, and acts of love,
And so to sink into the lap of years.'

MR. NEVILLE and his sister, whose feelings from the first had been greatly interested in Mrs. Wilmot's little *protégée*, as time went on, still continued sensible to her irresistible, though infantine attractions ; indeed, she was a child whose every act gave the fairest promise of excellence ; and, as she grew in years, evinced, with a mind full of vigour and intelligence, the unusual accompaniment of a heart of rare and sweet simplicity.

Many were the conversations which took place between the brother and sister upon the subject of the child. It was evident from the dying words of the gipsy woman, and the unnatural behaviour of the reputed father, that there were the strongest reasons for believing she was in reality a stolen child. This at first had been a

subject of great disquietude to the Wilmots, who by the idea, felt their possession of the little May rendered an uncertain one : but by degrees it passed wholly from their minds, and they almost ceased to remember she was other than their own dear offspring. But it was very different with Mr. Neville, though he kindly avoided alluding to his suspicions to the farmer, on whom they could only inflict an useless anxiety ; and every day both the pastor and his sister became more and more convinced that the little foundling came of no common parentage. At times they fancied that perhaps the romance of her story gave rise to these surmises ; and when they beheld her every action marked by innate elegance, and witnessed her high-bred, and, what some might have termed, aristocratic appearance, they felt inwardly persuaded these were the legible stamps of superior birth. Her delicate feet—her long and taper fingers—her beautifully turned head—her symmetric and swanlike neck—were, they well knew, traits almost peculiar to the patrician daughters of the land ; and how was it that all this exclusive cast of loveliness united itself in the form of the lowly-born May ? Her disposition though truly tender and affectionate, was retiring, sensitive,

and shy ; and it was not difficult to imagine that in a different sphere of life, with another system of education, some shades of haughtiness might have mingled themselves with the otherwise gentle qualities of her heart. Now such feelings were never called forth : to her village companions she was ever kind, though evincing no inclination to form or cherish with them any intimacy ; but to her father and mother, and her kind friends Mr. Neville and his sister, her affection was ardent in the extreme and seemed to centre in them alone.

For Jane Wilmot her attachment was so deep—so absorbing, that even at her young age, it approached almost to enthusiasm : towards her adopted father it took the character of an affection at once tender and relying ; while again, with the tact of a delicate mind, she early evinced for Mr. Neville and his sister a most touching sense of veneration, mingled with a grateful love.

With regard to Mr. Neville, it was impossible for him to be known without exciting the liveliest feelings of respect, admiration, and attachment. In the early part of his life he had travelled much, and had stored his mind with information and those acquirements, which now, in the calm

and even tenor of a clerical life, afforded him a never-failing source of interest and pleasing recollection.

His sister, justly beloved by her brother, was in want of a home. Her husband had died suddenly, and left her with scarcely any resources. Devotedly attached to her husband, the heart of the widow appeared to be almost broken; and with youth offering the prospect of a long, though sorrowing, life, her pilgrimage in this world promised to be a sad and weary one. She knew not where to go—in what part of the world to fix herself. Mr. Neville entreated his sister to become the mistress of his house; and by thus convincing her that there were still duties remaining to her in this world, her dormant energies were awakened, and restored her to herself.

Mrs. Villars proved a real solace to her brother in his retirement; and contributing every day to his comfort, aiding him in all his benevolent pursuits, entering into his refined and simple amusements, and receiving daily from his virtuous example fresh incitements to calmness and peace of mind, she became once more, what she had heretofore been, an active friend, an intelligent companion, and the most affectionate and devoted of sisters.

Mrs. Villars often urged her brother to allow her to give the little May the advantage of a superior and enlightened education. Possessing herself every accomplishment necessary to render her a perfect instructress, willingly would she have devoted her time in bestowing them upon a child of so much promise ; but Mr. Neville always opposed this measure. He would say—
‘Teach her to be a good Christian and a good daughter to the excellent people who have adopted her. In her present obscurity she will probably pass her life ; why teach her what may raise her wishes beyond the humble home the Almighty has provided for her? Indeed, my dear sister, it is one of the errors of the times in which we live—the system of over-education adopted in every family. I am speaking now without any reference to our simple-minded May ; but it distresses me when I look around, and see the manner in which parents are educating, or suffering others to educate, their children. *Show* is evidently the end to which all their efforts tend ; and it is only when a glittering list of arts and accomplishments has been forced on the boy they have rendered trifling and self-sufficient—on the girl they have made vain and forward, that they consider their purposes have been

answered ; forgetting to teach the awful truth, that all have an immortal soul—or in what manner that soul is to be made acceptable for Heaven. And is it not dreadful to see parents thus failing to reflect how suddenly their children may be called into a world, where all the acquirements, for which they now sacrifice every thing, will be as worthless as the painted dust which adorns the butterfly's wings ? where all that is not founded on religion, and on the reason and virtue which religion teaches, shall have passed away with the other gaudy trappings of the world ? You will think me very prosy, my dear sister,' continued Mr. Neville, taking a book from the table before him ; ' but here are some lines which express so well my opinion relative to the education of females, that I must read them to you. Speaking of the modern systems which are creeping in, the poet asks,—

‘ Are ye not apt
To taint the infant mind, to point the way
To fashionable folly, strew with flowers
The path of vice, and teach the wayward child
Extravagance and pride ? Who learns in you
To be the prudent wife, or pious mother ?—
To be her parent's staff, or husband's joy ?
—'Tis you dissolve the links that once held fast
Domestic happiness—'Tis you untie
The matrimonial knot—'Tis you divide

The parent and his child—Yes, 'tis to you
We owe the ruin of our dearest bliss.
The best instructress for the growing girl
Is she that bare her. Let *her* first be taught,
And we shall see the path of virtue smooth
With often treading. She can best dispense
That frequent medicine the soul requires,
And make it grateful to the lip of youth,
By mixture of affection. She can charm
When others fail, and leave the work undone.
She will not faint, for she instructs her own.
She will not torture, for she feels herself.
So education thrives, and the sweet maid
Improves in beauty, like the shapeless rock
Under the Sculptor's chisel ; till at length
She undertakes her progress through the world
A woman fair and good, as child for parent,
Parent for child, or man for wife, could wish.'

'And now,' pursued Mr. Neville, after his sister had acknowledged the truth of the lines, which he had read, 'and now, but one word more regarding our little favourite. Let us cultivate in her every species of useful acquirement which will render her happy in her present station, giving her at the same time a perfect knowledge of religion, that she may walk blameless before her God. To this really blessed end, let all our endeavours be directed ; and lovely and fascinating as she already promises to

be, do not give her merely exterior embellishments, which may one day only lead her into the temptations and follies of the world, and possibly render her a victim to the snares to which the young, the beautiful, and the unprotected, are so often exposed. The obscurity and mystery of her birth is great, but why should we wish to withdraw the veil which hangs over it? She can scarcely be happier than she now is, or own a greater blessing than being a child of such excellent and virtuous parents as those who now so tenderly cherish her.'

And indeed May *was* happy ; her home, though humble, was comfortable and cheerful in the extreme, and the gladness of her youthful heart might be traced in the blithe and melodious song with which she greeted the morning's early hour, when, like the lark which carolled above her head, she left her slumbers for the sweet duties of the day. Gaily and with delight would she hasten to assist her dear mother in her various labours—labours which were only so in name, for to her, every occupation was an active pleasure. But her dearest office was that of making herself useful to her father ; and with playful earnestness she would prevent all assistance, nor allow Mrs. Wilmot to interfere with her in pre-

paring his meals, or in arranging and keeping in the most perfect order his linen, and the few books and pamphlets which constituted the farmer's library. Indeed, there could be scarcely a greater punishment inflicted upon her than to have anticipated her in these kind duties ; but, above all, that which she would consider most exclusively her own, was the gay task of preparing breakfast—a meal her watchful affection soon told her was his most favourite one. Her delight in spreading the snowy cloth, in cutting the bread and butter, in placing before him a delicate jar of honey—the produce of her own bees—and the plate of fresh water-cresses which she had risen early to procure, was only equalled by the pleasure these kind attentions taught her protectors' hearts to feel.

It was a touching and beautiful sight to behold this lovely child thus occupied. Her graceful form and high-bred demeanour seemed scarcely belonging to a cottage ; and yet the affection which beamed from her countenance, whilst bestowing these tender cares, spoke of the genuine feelings of rustic life, at the same time that it indicated filial attachment in its most attractive form.

What happiness it is for those parents who thus

witness the active goodness of their child !—and be assured, my young readers, that domestic duties are not less pleasing, nor less acceptable, in the sight of your Heavenly Father. They must ever hold pre-eminently the first place in the ordinary range of Christian services ; and while you are watching the sick-bed of a suffering parent, soothing the sad hours of disease by tender assiduities, or seeking to enliven the closing eve of life's little day of some aged relative, by your presence and considerate attentions, you may rejoice in the belief that you are acting righteously in the sight of God ; and by thus following the precepts of your Saviour, may, after a life well spent, hear the joyful invitation, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father !'

James Wilmot fully appreciated the happiness of possessing so excellent a daughter, in which light he ever considered the virtuous little May ; and in a measure reaped in this world the reward of the benevolence which had led him to foster her. May rejoiced in his affection, and in the tender words of compliment which he lavished upon her ; and if in a moment of pre-occupation the farmer failed to utter the usual, 'Thank you, my own darling ;' or, 'What a happy man I am to have so good a little daughter !' she would wait

her time with a delicate tact, and then, when she knew she might, without being troublesome, claim his attention, put both arms around his neck, and say with mock gravity, 'What a pity my father no longer loves his poor little May!' and then, smiling and chiding him by turns, delight and amuse the worthy Wilmot by her fascinating playfulness.

CHAPTER VI.

‘ Within my infant breast parental care
 The living seed of young devotion planted,
 And watch’d and water’d it—and pray’d and panted
 That it might spring, and bud, and blossom there.’

FOR two hours every day, Mary went to the Rectory, where Mrs. Villars instructed her in reading, writing, and needle-work of every kind; farther than that she did not go, with the exception of selecting for her books of a superior order, which expanded and improved her mind, affording her at the same time the most engrossing amusement.

May was a child of great natural abilities, with a memory so singularly good, that she could retain with the utmost accuracy any thing she had either read or heard. Mr. Neville’s sermons, which were to her subjects of absorbing interest, she could repeat in a most extraordinary manner; and once during an illness of many weeks’ duration, which confined Farmer Wilmot to his house, May regularly repeated to him the sermon, of

which he was unfortunately deprived the benefit of hearing.

Brookside Farm was situated in a most retired spot, which afforded so few neighbours that May formed few acquaintance of her own age ; indeed she was brought up so differently from the other children of the village, that Mrs. Wilmot, and her friends at the Rectory, were not anxious that she should associate much with them. However, although she was a child of most retiring manners, she was loved by all who knew her, for never was May found to be unkind ; and there was something in her calm and even dignified manner, contrasting so strongly with that of others, and which imparted to her an air of such decided superiority, that there was a degree of respect shewn towards her by every one. One little girl looked up to her with peculiar regard and admiration—Susan Ashfield, the daughter of a farmer in the neighbourhood. She was unhappy, poor girl, in having lost an excellent mother ; and on the second marriage of her father with a woman of a harsh and unkind disposition, she learnt more deeply to regret the treasure she had been deprived of. Susan Ashfield was a girl of high spirit, and, perhaps, sometimes made matters worse, by giving way to the impulses of wounded feelings. She

had not yet sufficiently studied that most important of lessons—to ‘bear and forbear;’ she however possessed a good heart and a grateful disposition, and kindness would always produce that impression, which no degree of harshness could create.

Susan passed many a wretched hour; and one day was discovered by the tender-hearted May, sitting on a bank near her father’s house, weeping bitterly. She had that morning been beaten cruelly by her mother-in-law for some trifling misdemeanor.

May mingled her tears with those of the poor girl, and, thinking that she should suffer if her mother even looked unkindly upon her, she seated herself by the side of her afflicted young friend, and asked her kindly what was the exact cause of her present distress.

‘Why, dear May,’ she said, ‘perhaps I am also to blame, but my mother-in-law is so unkind to me, that it may be I am sometimes a little pert. But now if any thing goes wrong, it is always thought my fault; if her baby cries, it is I who have hurt it. I am obliged to nurse it from morning to night; and though I do not mind that, for I love the child, still I am blamed, and ordered about in such a manner, and so hard-worked, and so seldom know what it is to have

a kind word said to me, that I believe my temper is becoming bad. But,' continued the poor girl, sobbing violently, 'I think of my dear mother who is dead, and remember how *she* loved me; and then I become indifferent to every thing in this world, and dislike—and, I fear I may almost say, hate—the unworthy woman who has taken her place.'

'Oh! do not say so, my dear Susan,' said May; 'remember she is your father's wife: and have you so completely forgotten the precepts of our good friend, Mr. Neville, in his discourses to us every Sunday, what a point he makes of Christian forbearance towards each other? I know in your case it is a difficult task for you to bear with so much unkindness, and I have heard Mr. Neville say, that the sweetest natural disposition may be soured by constant ill-treatment: but we must seek for that forbearance, that feeling for those with whom we live, that will lead us to give up our own interests for those of others. Dear Susan,' May continued, still more earnestly, as she perceived that her words seemed to have weight, and pressing the poor weeping girl's hands within her own,—'Dear Susan, do you not recollect that a kind word often turneth away wrath? and if you were to strive and please your mother, you must

in time make some impression upon her ; at least she would have no excuse for ill-treating you ; and, above all, you would have no cause for self-reproach. How much we hear, almost every Sunday, upon the subject of the regulation of our tempers ! I particularly recollect a part of the last sermon, when Mr. Neville said we were not to think highly of the offences we may commit for want of due command over one's temper, or suppose ourselves responsible for them to our fellow creature only ; but—and, O Susan, how solemn his voice sounded as he continued—‘ be assured you must give a strict account of them all to the Supreme Governor of the world, and who has made this a great part of your appointed trial upon earth. Well did our Lord declare, ‘ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God ;’ and yet how little of this spirit is there upon earth ! When we look around us in the world, who would believe that relationship exists among its inhabitants ? When we see the quarrels and the coldnesses, the lawsuits and the strifes between those who are not only bound by the common tie of Christian fraternity, but by the closest and most indissoluble bonds of blood, are we not tempted to inquire, can these indeed be ‘ brethren ?’ Can they be all trusting to the

same hope of salvation, and expecting to dwell together in the same heaven ? It is impossible ; with such feelings the same eternal mansions could not contain them. If they were admitted there, heaven would be no heaven if it were a place where so many differing families were all to congregate together in one eternal abode.'

'How forcible is this appeal, Susan !' May continued, after a short pause, only broken by the sighs of her attentive and interested hearer : 'when I was listening to it, how thankful I felt that my lot was cast where I enjoy so sweetly the delights of peace and kindness. I know I am a most fortunate girl, and my happiness only makes me the more feel for your very different lot ; but still I think you may amend it. Try to bear gently with your mother's unkindness, and you will be happier when you consider, that to cultivate such feelings is absolutely requisite to the attainment of higher felicity in the world to come.'

'Yes, May, all this is very true, I know ; but our tempers are not in our own power, and if mine is bad it is rather my unhappiness than my fault.'

'I do not like to hear you speak thus, dear Susan ; but do not think I venture to disapprove

from imagining myself superior to you : indeed you would wrong me if you did. I know that I have never been tried ; my life has been one of continual happiness ; nor have I known what it was to have a harsh word said to me : therefore I ought only to be grateful and humble, and endeavour not to draw down the displeasure of the Almighty by arrogance or self-sufficiency ; but again must I say, that I am sure it is at least worth the trial to endeavour to meet your mother's severity with gentleness and temper. It is true we are not all equally happy in our dispositions, but we must endeavour to check and subdue every propensity to do wrong. I have heard Mr. Neville repeat to those who sought his advice, ' Watch the symptoms of ill-temper as they rise with a firm resolution to conquer them, before they are even perceived by any other person. In every such inward conflict call upon your God to assist the feeble nature he has given you, and sacrifice to him every feeling that would tempt you to disobedience ; so will you at length attain the true Christian meekness, which is blessed in the sight of God and man ; which has the promise of this life as well as that which is to come. Then will you pity in others those infirmities which you have conquered in

yourself, and you will think yourself as much bound to assist, by your patience and gentleness, those who are so unhappy as to be under the dominion of evil passions, as you are to impart charity to the poor and miserable.' "

Susan listened with the deepest attention to the advice of her young monitress ; indeed it would have been difficult to avoid being impressed by the animated and almost inspired manner of our dear May, whose countenance while she repeated the words of her revered friend was lighted with an expression almost heavenly.

I have thus narrated the foregoing conversation, to impart to my young readers some idea of the character of this child, which was of no common stamp. Brought up as she was in obscurity, and only educated in the plainest manner, still did her mind evince a depth and strength rarely to be found in one so young. Beholding on all sides the exercise of religion in its purest form, and early taught to make it her first and dearest object, she was deeply impressed with a sense of its importance. In her home the day was begun and ended in prayer ; her last words at night were praises to her Heavenly Father ; and, as she knelt down with her parents to pour

forth an evening prayer of thanksgiving, it was heartfelt devotion, not mere lip service, which directed their aspirations to the Throne of Grace.

“ How devoutly must it be desired, that a greater portion of the spirit of prayer was shed abroad upon us unprofitable servants, that there might be more of that secret communing with God—that habitual and strict intercourse with Him, the absence of which throws such coldness over the feelings of us his people, and such a formality and deadness over our best services ! You cannot ask more than your Redeemer is ready to grant. You cannot seek too near an access to him in whom you believe ; and be assured if you are really sincere in your desire of ‘ drawing nigh unto God,’ and earnest in prayer, the Spirit of Grace will not be wanting to encourage ; the power of Christ will not be wanting to bring you unto him, though all the weakness of human nature should place itself between you.”

CHAPTER VII.

‘ What is our duty here ? to tend
From good to better—thence to best ;
Grateful to drink life’s cup—then bend,
Unmurmuring to our bed of rest ;
To pluck the flowers that round us blow,
Scattering their fragrance as we go.’

FARMER WILMOT had been very prosperous in all his concerns, and they were now able to afford the additional expense of keeping a female servant to assist in the household labours. By these means May had now considerable time to amuse and instruct herself ; and though she had ever shared the occupations of Mrs. Wilmot with unvarying cheerfulness and industry, she was not unconscious of the advantage it was to be now freed from the obligation of so strict an attention to the duties of the house and farm.

May was now nearly fifteen ; at least so they calculated by her appearance when they had first taken her from the misery in which she had been found, and her tall and improving figure now

confirmed their surmises. She had now much leisure to pass a considerable portion of her time with her kind friends at the Rectory, where she always gained additional knowledge and intelligence ; but it was not without some doubt and apprehension that Mr. Neville saw her young mind imbibing tastes and ideas which he feared might raise her wishes beyond her present prospects. However, May was thoroughly satisfied with her home ; and never for a moment did the wish for any thing beyond the peace and contentment she at present enjoyed, cross her imagination : indeed, how could it, when she contrasted her happy life with that of the village children ? —and often, after having witnessed the discomfort or misconduct of some youthful neighbour, she would exclaim with emotions of fervent gratitude, ‘ What have I done to receive such happiness ? ’

May derived much satisfaction from seeing that her young friend Susan Ashfield was much more comfortable than she used to be. May’s admonitions had produced their proper effect upon her mind ; and, determining to try the result of perfect forbearance on her part, not an impertinent word or look escaped her when her mother-in-law scolded her. So completely did

she repress any ebullition of temper, that soon there was no excuse for ill-treatment ; and in time, notwithstanding Mrs. Ashfield's natural violence of disposition, she was obliged to confess that Susan had really become a very good girl.

Happy indeed was the situation of May in every respect. Adored by her kind and indulgent parents, sincerely loved by the friends she so highly revered, surrounded by comfort on every side, there was nothing left for her heart to wish. Constantly occupied in performing her duty, and pleasing those whose slightest wish was her law ; enjoying health and liberty, and the varied amusements which the country affords, she certainly partook of the felicity which is most congenial to our natures, and approaching more nearly to that state in which we were originally created, though luxury and refinement have done much to disturb such pure and simple sources of happiness.

May's amusements were never ending ; for nature supplied her most amply with pleasures, while the same kind Providence had endowed her with a heart capable of appreciating them. Her flowers, her poultry-yard, her dairy, her bees, were all delights, though necessitating, constant,

and laborious occupation : but May was a busy little person, and her only regret was that she could not make her day twice as long.

How widely distinct, and how greatly superior in advantages is the life led by the happy child, whose parents are enabled to rear it among the healthful and improving pleasures afforded by the country, to that state of artificial existence which marks the young days of those whose natural protectors, by choice or necessity, confine their charges to the polluted atmosphere and corrupting influence of our large towns ! Withheld from the enjoyment and the contemplation of the beauties of nature, which to the unsophisticated heart of childhood is known to offer the best and dearest joys, what are the amusements and pursuits of that poor prisoner, that victim to the tastes and situation of its parents, a town-bred child ? Exchanging the invigorating influence of exercise in the pure air, amidst woods and verdant fields, for the splendid pageantry and the refinement of art it is unable to appreciate—what does the young mind gain by the exchange ?—Alas ! a worldliness of heart that always comes too early ; and that disrelish for simple pleasures, the sad penalty of our advances in luxurious indulgence, and of years mis-spent. Ignorant of the garden's

treasures, scarcely distinguishing even by name those flowery adornments of earth, bestowed by the profuse hand of God. All they know of the pure happiness felt by the country-child, is from books, or perhaps from the artless description of some happier little friend ; and when they see the faded, ill-odoured bouquet (the prize from some green-grocer's stall) with which, as a matter of taste, their governess may decorate the school-room chimney-piece, well may they doubt the accuracy of those histories which seek to describe the treasures of Flora as sources of rejoicing and innocent delight.

Unacquainted with the wild bliss which it is to the healthful child to exercise its limbs unrestrainedly in the green meadow, or on the healthy down, whose activity learns to be more active, the fragile inhabitants of the town school-room, ignorant of country sports and country joys, find its pleasures confined to the stiff, formal walk—the new dress, of which the elegance is only valued as being superior to that worn by some less *récherché* neighbour—or to the ball, which, with its previous practisings and laboured exhibitions, ought rather to be considered as a placard of the dancing-master's talents, and is nothing like the merry

fête we should expect to find in a youthful ball-room.

Of the many artificial habits and recreations of a town-life, perhaps none are more objectionable than these midnight revels, where the child, the *real* child, soon loses all sense of enjoyment, and yawns with music, in a position decidedly foreign to its impulses and to its very nature. Nor is *ennui* the only evil genius conjured up at these assemblies. Too often have we seen the love of admiration and display find birth in a young heart, which, but for these ill-judged pastimes, might never have known such dangerous inmates. Too often have we seen the worldliness and the jealousies of maturer years distorting at a juvenile ball the lovely faces of mere babes.

These public assemblies, as we have frequently witnessed them, become snares for parent as well as child; for, once imperceptibly drawn into the vortex of false ambition, it is greatly to be feared, that parents will run many risks, and make many compromises, which at other times they would shrink from, rather than forego for their children one of the fictitious advantages coveted for the lovely idols of their hearts. But the beautiful child may not grow up to be the admired woman;

beauty is evanescent at all times, and many a disappointed mother has learnt, with misplaced grief, how particularly it is so in childhood. The parents, too, who are now able to gratify the wishes and pamper to the utmost these worshipped images of their vanity, may not live to continue their indulgence ; and the heart must ache with commiseration at the thoughts of the sufferings of that poor little being, who, bereft of the enervating though fostering care of a fond mother, finds itself with all the artificial wants engendered by over-indulgence, consigned to the cold, unfeeling care of uninterested hirelings. Oh that parents would bring up their children *as children*, in innocence and nature, with fond care, but with grave correction, and not suffer them to forestall those false and exciting joys which the ways of a degenerate world have rendered customary ! Surely as Christians they ought to aim higher for their children, nor ambition for them that admiration which is shared by the opera-dancer and the professional performer. Let children dance to improve their strength, to give grace and vigour to their limbs, and as a recreation to themselves ; and let them even occasionally meet together to enjoy this innocent amusement with their young playmates

and companions. Dancing is peculiarly suited to childhood ; and we should rejoice to see their young and happy faces beaming with the redoubled glow of animation and healthful exercise, every pleasure being heightened by the presence of their beloved parents and their dearest friends ; but let them not be decked out as puppets for the amusement of a crowd, who probably return home to laugh at the credulous parents, who by thus feeding the natural inclination of the human heart for vanity, help to rivet a chain about their offspring, which, linking them too powerfully to the things of this world, may impede their progress even to the gates of heaven, open only to those who use this world without abusing it.

CHAPTER VIII.

'Still raise for good the supplicating voice,
 But leave to Heaven the measure and the choice :
 Safe in His power, whose eyes discern afar
 The secret ambush of a specious prayer.
 Implore his aid, in his decisions rest,
 Secure whate'er He gives, He gives the best.'

It was an evening in spring, fine and bright, but sufficiently cold to make the fire, which May was anxiously stirring into a blaze, likely to prove acceptable to the farmer, whom they were expecting to return home from the neighbouring town where he had gone upon business early in the morning. He was unusually late; and poor May, after returning, for at least the twentieth time, from looking over the garden-gate, down the road which she knew he must take, exclaimed with undissembled anxiety, 'Dear mother, what can have become of my father? His supper will all be spoilt; and it is very late for him to be out,

for there is a very cold wind, and he was complaining of not feeling well this morning. Besides, he promised too to bring me home a warm shawl for poor old Sarah, and I promised to take it to her this evening ; but if he does not make haste, I shall not be able, for it is already getting dark.'

'Indeed I never knew your father so late, my dear,' Mrs. Wilmot replied, sharing May's inquietude ; 'but hark ! do I not hear the sound of a horse ?'

'Yes, mother ; here he is !'—and out flew May, full of glee, and with plenty of questions ready to pour upon the farmer ; but in an instant her gaiety was checked. No smile greeted her animated approach. The farmer looked grave and very sad ; and, getting off his horse, without saying a word or even looking at his eager child, he led it into the stable ; and so unlike himself did he appear, that May felt alarmed, and did not venture to follow him, as she was accustomed to do ; but waiting until he again appeared, she narrowly observed him, and her heart sunk within her, for his eyes were evidently red, and she could not help fearing that he had been weeping. She said not a word, but followed him into the house, pale and trembling :

there she found her mother, who, not at first perceiving the symptoms which had struck such a damp over the feelings of May, began questioning her husband upon the reason of the lateness of his return.

‘Do not ask me any questions just now, wife,’ he replied, ‘for I am very tired, and do not feel well.’

‘Sit down in your arm-chair, father, and let me give you something to revive you ;—a glass of wine, dearest father, for I know you are ill :’—and May threw her arms round his neck, and began to weep bitterly. A foreboding of evil struck her forcibly : she was sure something had happened to vex him dreadfully, for never had she seen his countenance so disturbed.

Farmer Wilmot sat down, and drawing his darling girl upon his knee, and hiding his face upon her shoulder, was soon heard by his alarmed wife to mingle sobs and tears with those of May ; and convulsive was the emotion which appeared to shake the frame of the worthy farmer.

‘What is the matter ?—for Mercy’s sake tell me !’—repeated many times poor Mrs. Wilmot ; but no answer could she obtain. May was becoming every moment more and more agitated by seeing the sufferings of her father ; and Mrs.

Wilmot was amazed and distracted by witnessing a scene so distressing and so unaccountable.

At this moment a knock was heard at the door, and Mr. Neville entered the apartment : he too looked very grave, and, as he regarded the melancholy group before him, became evidently much agitated.

Both May and her mother rushed towards him, and entreated him to tell them what was the cause of the farmer's excessive grief.

Mr. Neville did not answer this question, but going up to Farmer Wilmot, he took him by the hand, and said, in a tone of commiseration and feeling, 'My good friend, this utter despondency is wrong ; you must and ought to struggle against it.'

'But, sir, how will my poor wife bear this blow ?' 'Leave her to me, Wilmot ; I will break to her what has happened, and I shall rely upon her fortitude, and the sense of religion which I know she possesses, to carry her through the trial she has to encounter. Leave the room, my excellent friend, and calm yourself ; and remember that submission to the will of God is a duty strictly required of us.'

The farmer obeyed the wishes of his revered

pastor, and Mr. Neville was left alone with the terror-struck wife and poor weeping May.

‘Now, dear May, listen to what I have to say,’ said this kind friend, as he seated himself between her and her mother; ‘and you, my good Mrs. Wilmot, summon up all your fortitude, and remember ‘that the Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away: blessed be the name of the Lord!’’ Mr. Neville paused for a moment; then, taking the hand of May within his own, continued:— ‘You have never been told, my dear child, that you are not the daughter of these excellent people, who have indeed been parents to you in the excess of care and affection they have shewn you, but who are in reality unallied to you. Nay, start not, nor give way to so much emotion; you must listen to me with patience. You were found by them in want and misery, brought on you by the wickedness of evil people; and they took you home and fostered you, and felt for you all the tenderness of the kindest of parents. Now I entreat you again to receive what I am now obliged to impart with as much calmness as you can command. Rouse all your energies, my beloved child, my worthy good girl, for I must now tell you that your real parents have discovered

your existence, and are about to claim you as their own.'

A scream of terror from May stopped Mr. Neville abruptly in his communication, and he then perceived that Mrs. Wilmot had fainted away.

The scene which ensued may be imagined, but is far too painful to be described.

The utter wretchedness of all the inhabitants of the farm was profound and overwhelming. The love which these excellent people felt for the child of their adoption,—the manner in which she had become necessary to their happiness, was so great, that the idea of losing her was to them almost as dreadful an affliction as if they had seen the grave close over her. Henceforth she was to live, to smile, to be a joy to those around her, but not for them were all her sweet and endearing qualities to be exercised! At this moment their grief was perhaps too absorbing, and for a short time threw a veil over those better feelings—those feelings of resignation, which a true and lively faith in the mercy and wisdom of God ought to suggest, to teach us never to doubt, never to despair, if we are visited by the severest trials, but to feel assured that they are as much the fruits of our heavenly

Father's love as his more obvious blessings ; and if we are called upon to give up our dearest possession, that same faith will teach us, even amidst nature's keenest sufferings, to kiss the rod while worshipping Him whose inscrutable will appoints our trials, and in the darkest hour of nature's woe to remember with confidence that ' God will provide.'

There are, however, afflictions so deep and overwhelming, the sorrowing feelings they occasion must be indulged in ; and it was thus with the family at the farm ; but God in his mercy allows us tears for the relief of such bitter griefs. We *may* mourn, but not as ' those that are not to be comforted ;' and after nature has found vent in the natural expression of our sorrow, we must look to the God of our salvation, who solaces all those who turn to him in heart and in spirit.

CHAPTER IX.

‘ If bitterness drug our earthly cup,
 If sorrow disturb our career;
 Eternity’s joys can well fill up
 The chasms of suffering here.’

My readers will no doubt be very anxious to hear every particular relating to the events of the last chapter, and I must lose no time in narrating to them the history of the disclosure, which will restore our heroine to her rightful parents.

A gang of gipsies, of the worst description, had been taken up, some of the party having been implicated in a most atrocious murder, of which they were found guilty. One of the wretched men before he was executed made a full confession of his guilt, and also of the crimes of his past life. Amongst many dreadful deeds, he mentioned having been accessory to stealing a little girl from the park of the Earl of Avondale, near Bristol, and who he believed was their

only child. She had been laid asleep upon a haycock, whilst the nurse was amusing herself by having her fortune told by one of the women belonging to the gang. They were instigated to this daring and outrageous act by the splendour of an ornament that attracted them, and which was hung round the neck of the sleeping child. Fearful of detection, they immediately embarked on board a vessel which was on the point of sailing for Cork, and they remained in Ireland until they imagined the pursuit after the child might be relaxed. The gipsy said, he believed she had been with the gang about two years, when they happened to be encamped in the neighbourhood of Brookside Farm, where the child was taken from them by a farmer of the name of Wilmot, who promised to bring her up as his own child ; and they were very glad to get rid of her, for they were always afraid of detection. Once, indeed, the gipsy had thought of informing the Earl of Avondale of these particulars, first stipulating for a large reward, and the sacred promise that no punishment should be inflicted ; but a long transportation for some theft had driven the matter from his mind, nor had it since occurred to him. He said the child had a peculiar mark upon her

forehead, a scar, which appeared to have been inflicted by a sharp instrument. It was in the month of May that they found the child, and in consequence of that circumstance they had always called her May. The confession went on further to state, that the child was remarkable for the darkness of her eyes, and for her long curling dark hair.

This extraordinary confession soon met the notice of the Earl and Countess of Avondale, who had for many years sought in vain for their lost and only child;—a child so doubly valuable to them, for she was heiress at once to their title, and to the immense hereditary estates which accompanied it.

Lord Avondale, as may be well imagined, lost no time in making the further inquiries which were necessary; and the result was so far in corroboration of his hopes, that after travelling with the most incredible expedition, a few hours before the scene described in the foregoing chapter, he had arrived in the most painful state of agitation and suspense at the Parsonage.

He hastily demanded an interview with Mr. Neville, who, as the clergyman of the place, he considered the most likely person to satisfy his inquiries.

In a few words Mr. Neville was able to dispel his doubts, and convinced the enraptured father that his child was within a short distance of him.

At this moment the farmer happened to stop at the Parsonage gate, on his way home, to leave a letter which he had brought for Mr. Neville from the neighbouring town. Mr. Neville desired him to be shewn in ; and, whilst the Earl was almost on his knees before the good man, expressing in the most fervent and enthusiastic terms his gratitude and joy for all his tender care of his child, the poor farmer scarcely knew how to restrain a burst of grief at the idea of so completely losing her in whom he centered all a parent's affection.

Would an Earl's daughter continue to love a simple farmer?—would she not look back with shame on the years passed in an humble cottage? But even should his gentle May always love him, and think of him with affection, still she would be for ever lost to him ; and he knew too well that the difference of their stations would place a gulf between them never to be surmounted. He felt almost broken-hearted on the conclusion of Mr. Neville's communications, and was obliged hastily to leave Lord Avondale's presence to conceal the anguish which unmanned him.

Lord Avondale's impatience to see his child was of course excessive ; and it was with much difficulty that he was persuaded by Mr. Neville and his sister to defer the interview until the morning. They told his Lordship that the farmer and his wife were not common characters, and that they were full of deep and refined feeling ; that their love for the child of their adoption was of the purest and most fervent nature, their existence appearing wrapt up in her ; while her affection for those she considered her parents was equally lively and tender. By these representations they at length convinced the Earl that one night's preparation was quite necessary to tutor their feelings into calmness to bear the shock which the idea of her removal would cause the party ; and, after at last having obtained his promise to wait with patience until the morning, Mr. Neville went to the farm to discuss these events with its inhabitants. He was soon followed by his sister, who did indeed take a true part in their grief, and offered what consolation she could then suggest ; but she found it a difficult task, as she was almost as unhappy as her poor friends, for dearly did she love their darling May, whose distress and agitation was

most painful to behold. Her enthusiastic and affectionate heart had known no other attachment but that which she felt towards her supposed parents and her dear friends at the Rectory, and the idea of leaving them overwhelmed with agony her gentle heart. Mrs. Villars passed much of the night alternately at the bedside of her poor friends ; and at last succeeded in obtaining a promise of composure from May, in order that by some rest she might be able to meet her father the Earl the next day with propriety, and the semblance at least of calmness.

Lord Avondale could not enter into the feelings which so bitterly evinced themselves at the farm. He had always lived for the world, nor could he imagine happiness unconnected with it ; and to him it appeared that the transition from obscurity to splendour must be happiness itself. Although possessed of excellent natural feelings, they had never been brought forth or nurtured, and lay dormant, if not totally extinct, within his bosom. His marriage had been one of *convenience*. Lady Avondale was a beautiful woman of high rank and large fortune ; but I grieve to say, as she is the mother of our interesting May, that she was indeed a mere lady of fashion, without one quality, one feeling, which bespoke

a heart possessed of those gentle virtues so endearing in a woman.

Such a wife was not likely to elicit from a husband's bosom those benign charities of our nature which bade us see in every man a brother, and teach us to seek him as our friend ; and though Lord Avondale was really amiable, yet thrown amongst the society attracted to their circle by his worldly-minded wife, he degenerated like them into the mere ephemeral flutterer of the day, forgetting alike his higher destinies in this life and in the life to come.

Alas ! this world, how it deadens and perverts the faculties and the feelings of the soul !—and too often do we see that an abundance of this world's goods has ever been among the greatest impediments to a consistent observance of our duty. Seldom, too seldom, do we read in the history of our Saviour, that the rich, or the mighty, or the noble, were called into his kingdom. Those were chosen who lived in an humble sphere, who were unshackled by the pomps and vanities of this world ; those who were despised by the great, and rejected by the wealthy ; who threw themselves at the feet of Jesus, and who considered themselves blessed to find *there* their world, their happiness, and sal-

vation. The prosperity of this world, or rather the dependance we place upon the enjoyments which it affords, believe me, my young reader, is the greatest danger we encounter in it. An earnest desire after the pleasures of this life brings with it an increasing indifference to the duties of religion. Intimately was he acquainted with the human heart, who, looking round upon the splendid mansion of his friend, and remarking the exulting expression of his countenance, exclaimed, ‘ Ay, these are the things which make a death-bed terrible !’

CHAPTER X.

‘ But thou art fled
Like some bright exhalation, which the dawn
Robes in its golden beams ;—ah ! thou hast fled !
The kind, the gentle, and the beautiful—
The child of grace and virtue.’

MRS. VILLARS had with as much caution as possible broken to Lady Hyacinthe, (for we must now exchange the simple name of May for this more high-sounding appellation,) that her father intended taking her to London on the following day. This abrupt step appeared hasty and inconsiderate ; but still much was to be said for the anxiety of the mother, who had so long been deprived of the society of her child : in short, Lord Avondale was peremptory, and no choice was left her but to obey. His Lordship was profuse in his professions of gratitude, and to evince it there was no pecuniary recompence which he was not willing to make to the farmer and his wife. He talked of settling thousands upon

them, and was with difficulty convinced by Mr. Neville that five hundred a year was perfectly equal, if not more than sufficient, to satisfy all their bounded wishes : but how great was the Earl's surprise, when, on questioning Farmer Wilmot as to the method by which it were better this sum should be placed at his disposal, he at once gently but firmly refused all emolument from the hands which were destined to wrest his beloved May from his bosom ! It was in vain they expostulated with him on this indifference to the benefits of fortune : he would shake his head with a mournful expression, saying, ' The wealth of the Indies could not reconcile me to the loss of my child. It is only from the same Almighty hand which thus chastens us that I and my poor Jane can look to for peace and consolation.'

Mr. Neville in some measure reconciled Lord Avondale to the unbending refusals of the farmer, by intimating that he would always have it in his power to watch over his welfare, and administer to his wants and wishes ; adding, that he was certain the most perfect satisfaction his Lordship could impart to these most excellent people, would be the promise that they should occasionally see the beloved being upon whom they had lavished so much affection. To this no

answer was returned ; but in the grave, confused expression of his countenance, Mr. Neville read, as plainly as though the Earl had spoken it, poor Hyacinthe's eternal separation from the friends of her youth.

Poor child ! dreary were her feelings when she left her bed the sad morning of her departure, and looking round her own dear little room, felt that it was for the last time.

The last time ! What a sound of wretchedness do these three words convey to the heart ! And for the last time was she soon to be clasped in the arms of her mother !—that mother who saved her from destruction—who had been so tender, so kind to her. And must she for the last time implore a blessing from that father, to whom she knew she was the solace and delight—the happiness of his declining years ? What would they do without her ? It was for them she mourned, for them she wept. ‘ My father, my dearest mother, what is to be done for them ? They love me so very much, their hearts will break. I know well that I made them happy, that they depended upon me for many things ; and now that they are growing old, I am to be torn from them, when I am becoming every day more necessary to their comfort.’

‘My dear madam,’ said the sorrowing girl, addressing Mrs. Villars in a broken and tremulous voice, ‘I have one favour to request, which is, that you will send for Susan Ashford. You tell me that this Lord who is my father will do anything for my poor parents here that money will purchase ; therefore I know that, by offering a sum of money, Mrs. Ashford will give up Susan, and I think she may be some little comfort here when I am gone. I need not ask you, kind friends, to console their affliction by your presence ; your goodness I know too well. To part from you is my third great misery, and never can I forget all you have done for me. My poor expressions in vain endeavour to convey to you all the gratitude I feel for your unremitting care and tenderness to the poor little foundling, who was thrown upon your kindness. But you will write to me, dear, dear Mrs. Villars, and your letters will be my only happiness ; and be assured that they will continue to be my guides, my monitors, throughout my life. All your precepts and counsels are engraven in my heart, and will, I trust, be my support in the new and dreaded existence which I shall have now to endure.’

Mrs. Villars at this moment was as much

affected as her dear young friend, and it was with the greatest effort that she conquered her emotion sufficiently to calm Hyacinthe, and bring her spirits to that state of firmness which would enable her to meet Lord Avondale without any distressing marks of agitation ; but she did at last induce her to subdue her feelings to that degree which permitted her to receive her father with propriety ; and, when he entered the room, she gracefully submitted to the tender embrace that he bestowed upon her.

Much was Lord Avondale agitated in beholding his long-lost child !—tears of gratitude and genuine feeling fell from his eyes as he looked at her, and pressed her again and again to his bosom, in delighted admiration at the beautiful girl, who, as she now stood before him in glowing loveliness, he saw was in form and feature the very image of her high-born mother, but with all her own benevolent and intellectual qualities shining forth in her bright and expressive countenance.

Anxiously and eagerly did the happy father part the clustering ringlets on her forehead to look for the scar, which was one great proof of her identity ; and joyfully did he discover it, although it had now dwindled into a little white mark, scarcely visible.

‘You cannot think how much distress that scar caused your mother, my dear child,’ the Earl said, smiling as he observed it : ‘your nurse let you fall from her knee upon the edge of a sharp fender, and so dreadful was the wound, that it was feared it would destroy your beauty altogether. However, that has fortunately not been the case,’ he added, looking with pride upon the blushing and lovely face of his daughter, so unused to listen to eulogiums on personal endowments.

We must pass over the wretched parting which took place between Hyacinthe and her afflicted friends. Indeed every heart must feel for them, if we think for a moment of that being—that object which we love the dearest, the most devotedly upon earth—and then imagine it taken away from us for ever ; with all our past happiness, every thing which engaged our thoughts, and influenced our affections, embittered by this one sad bereavement !

Alas ! there are few of us who could support such a visitation without murmurs—without tearful repinings—though still conscious the affliction comes direct from the hands of our Heavenly Father. Nature will rise up—that is, our earthly feelings—and the groan of anguish will burst

from the over-charged heart. But it ought not to be thus—and let us all emulate the Christian resignation of the excellent Wilmot and his wife, who, bowing humbly to the dispensations of their God, though with spirits heavy with the bitterness of grief, were yet soon able to say with the voice of piety, and faith in the supreme and unerring wisdom of their Maker, ‘Thy will, O Lord, be done!’

But the recollection of that moment of trial never passed from their hearts; and often, with the retrospective eye of sad regret, did they again see their beloved May, as they still in their affections called her, born fainting into the carriage, and placed in the arms of her newly-discovered father, conveyed rapidly away, far from the peaceful scenes of her contented childhood!—it was a painful image, but it would again and again recur, and was only to be banished by the hope that all this was ultimately to prove instrumental to the happiness of the dear child of their adoption.

CHAPTER XI.

‘ From the recesses of a lowly spirit
Her humble prayer ascends. O Father! hear it !
Upsoaring on the wings of fear and meekness.’

FOR many miles poor Hyacinthe was too much absorbed in grief to be any thing but a most sorrowful companion to her father ; but by degrees the violence of her sufferings in some measure abated, and she began to recollect the parting admonition of Mrs. Villars, who bade her ever remember that she now must regard Lord Avondale as her rightful father, and evince towards him the requisite affection and respect ; and that, moreover, it was her duty to bear always in mind, that giving way to inordinate grief savours too much of rebellion against the Divine will, who we know orders every event which happens to us his creatures. It had been an early lesson, that to question the wisdom of the Almighty’s decrees was an impiety, which led to deeper crimes : she therefore sought, by praying meekly within herself for fortitude to bear the trials awarded by

His chastening hand—rather to increase the spirit of righteousness in her bosom, than to shrink from the visitations which might be sent to prove it. Her pious aspirations were not without effect, and a sensation of hope and consolation evinced their holy power.

However, we cannot avoid feeling for our poor Hyacinthe, and sympathising in that sickly sorrow, ‘which is felt when we are first transplanted from a happy home;’—a sorrow the most difficult of endurance among those which mark our path in this lower world, because generally the first. ‘There are after-griefs which wound more deeply, which leave behind the scars never to be effaced, that bruise the spirit, and sometimes break the heart; but never do we feel so keenly the sense of utter desolation as when first leaving the haven of our home.’* It is then, when, as it were launched on the stream of life, an aching void pains our inmost soul; the want of love—the necessity of being loved—aggravates our feelings of loneliness and desertion; while images of past happiness rise up to heighten and complete the sum of bitterness. Alas! too early was poor Hyacinthe brought acquainted with such woe—too soon was the home of her

* Southey.

childhood, the kind friends of her infant years, but an image of regretful memory !

Nothing could exceed the attentions and tenderness of Lord Avondale ; and, at the close of the three days which nearly brought them to the end of their journey, Hyacinthe began to feel real affection for her newly acquired parent. Her heart, however sunk within her, when Lord Avondale informed her that they were entering London : she would now soon be in the presence of her mother ! But would this mother love her ? —should she receive from her the same endearing affection which the kind-hearted Mrs. Wilmot had ever evinced towards her ? Her noble mother would, she feared, look with contempt upon her countrified child ; and how could she ever accustom herself to the fastidious refinements of society after the humble life she had hitherto led ?

‘ Can I ever feel happiness in this crowded city ?’ she mentally exclaimed, as the carriage rapidly flew through the bustling streets, and a sensation of fear nearly overpowered her spirits. ‘ O my peaceful happy home—my dear father and mother !—would that I had ever remained in ignorance of my real fate, and that I could have passed the remainder of my life in tranquillity with you !—what happiness I have lost !’ She

was interrupted in these reflections by Lord Avondale saying, 'Now, Hyacinthe, we shall soon arrive—we are in Grosvenor Square;' and in a moment the carriage stopped at the door of a splendid mansion, which was instantly thrown open, and displayed the interior of a well lighted hall, filled with liveried and other servants.

Hyacinthe was almost lifted from the carriage by her father; for fear and emotion nearly deprived her of the use of her limbs. When she entered, her eyes were dazzled by the glare of light and bustle which appeared to surround her.

'Where is her Ladyship?' hastily inquired Lord Avondale.—'My Lady desired I would tell your Lordship,' answered the pompous-looking groom of the chambers, who poor Hyacinthe imagined must at least be another Lord—'that she was obliged to dine at the Duke of C——'s, and that her Ladyship will not be at home before twelve o'clock.'

The Earl looked hurt and mortified, and Hyacinthe's heart heaved heavily. What a reception for a long-lost child!

Lord Avondale led his daughter into a splendidly lighted apartment, where refreshments were laid out. He soon perceived that Hyacinthe was both weary and ill at ease: he therefore proposed

her retiring to rest ; to which she gladly consented.

Lord Avondale rang the bell, and ordering Mademoiselle Victorine, the Countess's maid, to be summoned, kissed Hyacinthe affectionately, and placed her in charge of the fine lady who immediately made her appearance.

Poor Hyacinthe looked round with surprise and dismay upon her conductress. Her idea of a servant was extremely limited ; and when she beheld a lady attired in a blue silk dress, her neck covered with gold chains, her fingers overwhelmed in rings, and her hair arranged in the last Parisian fashion, she thought there must be some mistake, and that some high born friend of her mother's must have kindly taken upon herself to show these attentions.

The size and magnificence of the house, instead of giving her pleasure, filled her more and more with awe ; and she shrunk with fear and timidity at the view of the numerous domestics whom she passed, and who evidently appeared to scan her person with the utmost curiosity.

Lord Avondale had taken care to supply her at the first good town through which they passed with a handsome pelisse and bonnet of a more fashionable construction than those with which

she had quitted the farm ; and her natural carriage was so good, so graceful and distinguished, that no remarks to her disadvantage could be made : on the contrary, on all sides was whispered, ‘The very image of my lady!—her own stately walk ! Well, to be sure, she does not look as if she had lived all her life in a farm-house !’

At length our poor weary heroine reached the door of her apartment, the sanctuary in which she hoped to repose undisturbed ; but Mademoiselle, after throwing open the door, followed her into it. Nothing could exceed the elegance with which the apartment was fitted up ; and if the sorrowful Hyacinthe had been in a more composed state of mind, she must have been struck by its magnificence : subdued as her spirits now were, she scarcely saw what was before her.

Mademoiselle Victorine began immediately offering her services in assisting her to undress. In vain Hyacinthe assured her she would rather be without them. ‘Oh ! miladi, her ladyship your mamma would be so displeased ; she would think it so very shocking for a young lady to be able to undress herself : and besides which, she desired me to arrange your hair, and make you look as well as possible for her to see you to-morrow ; *mais comme elle sera charmée, car vraiment vous*

êtes belle comme l'amour ! Yes, miladi,' she continued, regarding her astonished auditor as she stepped a few spaces back the better to observe her, 'you are beautiful,—very beautiful, and very like Madame la Comtesse : you will indeed be exquisite when dressed *comme il faut ; mais il y a beaucoup à faire,—beaucoup, beaucoup.*'

Hyacinthe blushed deeply at this tirade. Flattery had never before reached her ears ; and as she was by nature and education taught to condemn it, it grated upon her feelings and disgusted her. However, she submitted to her fate, and allowed herself to be pulled to pieces by the person who she now discovered must be a servant.

Poor girl ! she would have been abashed had she seen the supercilious look of contempt with which Mademoiselle regarded every part of her dress as she disrobed her. Fortunately, as regarded the present moment, she did not understand French ; therefore the exclamations, '*Oh ! mon Dieu, quel horreur ! —a-t-on jamais vu de telle lingerie ? c'est grosse comme le tablier d'un marmiton !*'—fell unheeded on her ear. She was soon apparelled in a lace dressing-gown ; and when Mademoiselle proceeded to take down her luxuriant hair, there was no describing the extravagance of the Frenchwoman's raptures : it all

ended, however, in her exclaiming with unaffected satisfaction, ‘ Oh, how happy miladi la Comtesse will be when she beholds this superb head of hair!—*vraiment c’est magnifique!*’ And indeed it was beautiful; bright, and glossy to the touch, if fell in the most graceful ringlets, rendering superfluous all the art of the experienced Victorine, who, seeing that it was unnecessary to go through the ceremony of placing it *en papillote*, after passing a beautiful ornamented hair-brush gently through it, placed a pretty night-cap upon the lovely head of the Lady Hyacinthe; and, seeing her spring hastily into the bed, she lighted a little silver lamp, and politely wishing her good night, left the apartment, and hastened to the steward’s room, where she was assailed by a host of questions. All that was then learned was, that the newly-found heiress was certainly very beautiful, but dressed in the lowest style possible; and assuredly, for a young lady who had always associated with farmers and farmers’ wives, she was wondrous cold and proud.

Poor Hyacinthe! how falsely did these words describe her feelings that night!—and who could have attributed cold-heartedness and pride to her, had they seen the emotion and deep humility

with which, on the servant leaving the room, she threw herself from her bed, and, falling on her knees, hastened to pay her evening devotions, and to ask for protection and support to lead her through the difficulties of her new station of life ? She foresaw many trials, and shrunk with aversion from the change ; but she prayed with fervour, and soon felt soothed and comforted. However, still some natural tears would flow in bitter streams, when her mind reverted to the sorrowing friends she had left behind. ‘ My poor darling mother ! ’ she mentally exclaimed, ‘ she is still no doubt thinking of her child. And my father, he is perhaps trying to console her ; but how ?—with a breaking heart I fear. And here I am—oh, how can I believe it ?—a high-born and wealthy personage, surrounded by luxury and riches, heiress to estates and titles ! But will all this ever make me happy ? Alas ! at this moment I feel, that once more to find myself under the dear roof which has so long sheltered me, and safe in the arms of my kind friends, would be bliss for which how delightedly would I give up all my possessions and expectations : but, as far as I only am concerned, I will endeavour to submit meekly to the will of God ; and oh ! may the Almighty vouchsafe his pro-

tection to my dearest friends ! Gracious Father ! I implore thee to soothe their sorrow, and bring their minds to bear with resignation thy dispensations.'

Hyacinthe returned to her bed, but her mind was in too agitated a state to permit her to sleep. Thoughts would intrude themselves ; and it required all her fortitude and strength of mind to prevent her murmuring at the idea, that such excellent and really religious people as the Wilmots should be destined to meet with such a return for all their goodness towards her. ' Did they not rescue me from destruction, and bring me up in the paths of virtue—and were not all their best affections centered in me alone ? And now I am torn from them for ever ; for much I dread from the words of Lord Avondale, that my proud mother will allow of no communication between me and persons whom she considers low-born. Oh ! if she did but know half their real worth—their goodness, piety, and honourable feelings ! Softened by these reflections, she wept again most bitterly. It was long before she could compose herself : but at length fatigue and exhaustion overcame her, and she was just dropping asleep, when she was aroused with a start by a thundering knock at the hall door. At first her rustic

ears, little accustomed to such sounds, made her doubt from whence they proceeded ; but she at last remembered what it was, and was again endeavouring to go to sleep, when her attention was attracted by voices whispering at her door, and presently it was softly opened. Hyacinthe's heart beat violently within her bosom ;—it might be her mother ! In this instance we cannot say much for the force of nature, for so great was her dread of meeting her new parent, that, although deceit had ever been foreign to her nature, it certainly for the first time entered her mind ; and the thought occurred to her to feign sleep, and thus put off the dreaded moment. She accordingly closed her eyes, but not before she had caught a glimpse of a radiant looking personage, followed by Mademoiselle, who advanced with cautious steps towards the bed. She then heard the following words :—‘ For Heaven’s sake, Victorine, walk softly ! I would not wake her for the world.’ These expressions fell sweetly upon the heart of her child, and they were uttered by a voice whose silvery tones were like music to her ear ; but the warm glow of satisfied feelings was immediately dispelled by those which followed,—‘ I dread a scene, and feel that I shall faint with horror when I hear her countrified dialect. Look

gently, and tell me if I may examine her in safety.'

Victorine approached on tiptoe, and, seeing Hyacinthe in what she imagined a deep sleep, motioned to her lady that she might draw near.

Perhaps at no time could Lady Avondale have seen her lovely child to more advantage. The agitation she had undergone had more than usually flushed her youthful countenance, while her long black eye-lashes were shown to full perfection shading the roses on her cheek. Her full red lips, compressed to conceal every internal emotion, enabled the beholder to judge accurately of the beautiful form of her mouth ; while her dark and silken ringlets, which clustered round a forehead of marble purity, were only partially concealed by the little lace nightcap that confined them. Lying as she did amidst the white drapery of the bed-clothes, her appearance of beauty, innocence and freshness, was indeed most striking.

The Countess gazed at her for some moments without uttering a word : we will give her credit for some natural feeling overpowering her heart when she looked for the first time on her long lost and only child. Indeed Mademoiselle was thunder-struck, by perceiving that for a moment her Ladyship's eyes were actually filled with tears.

She was about to run for *sal volatile*, camphor, julap, *eau de fleur d'orange*, and all such restoratives which are usually resorted to by fine ladies on those occasions when nature struggles against the *sang froid* imposed by custom ; but her steps were arrested by an exclamation from Lady Avondale, which plainly evinced that she was rapidly descending from her temporary exaltation of feeling. ' Thank Heaven ! ' she at length murmured, and then again she paused, apparently overwhelmed with gratitude—' Thank Heaven ! ' she again repeated with fervour—' she is at least pretty ! '

At these words Hyacinthe turned quickly in her bed ; a feeling of mortification, anger, and even disgust made her anxious to put an end to a scrutiny which brought forth such a result. Was it for the paltry advantage of those personal attractions she was supposed to possess, that her own mother uttered expressions of gratitude to Heaven ?

Lady Avondale was now anxious to depart, fearing she had roused her daughter ; but Mademoiselle told her that she need not be alarmed, for that people who had been brought up in cottages slept as sound as rocks. The Countess therefore lingered some time longer by the side of the silken bed on which her child reclined.

All she said farther did not tend to re-assure poor Hyacinthe. 'Victorine, she appears to be very tall ;—how old she will make me look !' 'Oh no, miladi, she is so beautiful, she will appear like your twin-sister.' 'But, Victorine, before you bring her to me in the morning, mind that you dress her properly, for I have not nerves for vulgarity. How is her complexion—not *very* brown, I hope ?—and her hands—good Heavens ! are they very coarse ? Victorine, you must really send to Delcroix for quantities of *pâte de miel*, unless he can recommend something of quicker operation—and her feet, with the dreadful shoes she must have worn all her life—poor unfortunate child, they must be entirely spoiled !'—and here tears actually returned to her ladyship's eyes.

Mademoiselle assured her lady that every thing was better than could be expected. 'And indeed, miladi,' said the consoling Abigail ; 'her ladyship has a high manner about her which rather surprised me ; and I could not help remarking to Monsieur Vol-au-vent, in the steward's room, that the butler's English proverb, 'What is bred in the bone, will come out in the flesh,' was very applicable to the Lady Hyacinthe ; for there was not a symptom of the farm-house to be perceived in her. However, miladi, I ought to have ex-

cepted the dress—such inventions!'—and here the lady's-maid made a grimace, expressing most eloquently her disgust; 'but happily I was able to put everything aside before vulgar eyes had seen the frightful coarseness of the linen of your ladyship's lovely daughter.'

'Thank Heaven! thank Heaven!' reiterated the mother, as she quitted the chamber, after listening with the utmost patience to the familiar remarks of the indulged Victorine.

Hyacinthe could not resist the inclination which tempted her to take one look at the being who gave her birth; she therefore hastily looked round as they were leaving the room, and the beautiful vision that met her eyes caused her heart to palpitate with admiration and astonishment. Her fairy dreams seemed all realised in the person of this lovely woman. She appeared young in the extreme, and her dress was so brilliant—so unlike any thing our rustic heroine had ever before beheld, that her delighted surprise was quite overpowering.

At length she exclaimed, 'Is it possible that any being so lovely can possess a heart apparently so cold! so dead to natural feeling?' and then she fondly thought that it could not be; that the world, the situation in which she had

lived, might have only partially perverted the disposition and ideas of her beautiful mother.

‘Perhaps if she had lived near dear Mr. Neville,’ continued the anxious Hyacinthe, almost audibly communing with herself—‘if she had possessed the advantage of being instructed by him—of hearing his excellent and righteous precepts, this beauteous creature might have been equally an angel in mind as she is now in person. And that sweet voice!—does it not seem in itself to show that she must be naturally good? Oh that I might be the happy means, the weak instrument in the hand of the Almighty, to endeavour to convey to her the blessing I have received of religious instructions; then indeed I should not have lived in vain! My poor mother, cast among the giddy pleasures of the world, has perhaps never heard the voice of pious remonstrance, or of affectionate counsel. Her heart too has been hitherto closed to the tender calls of maternal affection: who can say that when it opens to the claims of her long-lost child, it will not gain every other good and holy feeling?’

Hyacinthe again prayed fervently; and the spirit of prayer came with healing on its wings, soothing her agitated mind; so that she soon sunk sweetly into a deep repose.

CHAPTER XIII.

‘ Accomplishments have taken Virtue’s place,
 And Wisdom falls before exterior grace :
 We slight the precious kernel of the stone,
 And toil to polish its rough coat alone.
 A just deportment, manners graced with ease,
 Elegant phrase, and figure form’d to please,
 Are qualities, that seem to comprehend
 Whatever parents, guardians, schools, intend.’

HYACINTHE’S slumbers were profound ; and it was not until a late hour that she was awakened by Mademoiselle Victorine, who entered the room, followed by another almost equally smart lady, carrying all the variety of paraphernalia composing the toilet and attire of an elegant female.

Hyacinthe soon found herself under the inevitable dominion of these two accomplished Abigails ; and after various most tiresome trials of corsets, shoes, dresses, and an infinitude of minor, though not less important, articles, she was at length equipped to their satisfaction.

They discovered that her height was exactly

that of Lady Avondale ; and with slight alterations made on the moment, one of her dresses answered remarkably well. A small pair of Melnotte's shoes soon decked her pretty feet, and some delicate French gloves concealed a trifling coarseness in her otherwise well-formed hands. The only circumstance which really agonized Mademoiselle, was the trace which exposure to the sun had left upon her complexion. 'The Lady Hyacinthe was certainly much tanned ; and a few freckles were dispersed on the pure and silky surface of her skin. Victorine's exclamations of distress were most amusingly pathetic—' *Ah ! Dieux !* what will miladi say ! She will expire at the sight of these plebeian spots. *Ah ! que nous sommes malheureuses !* an ocean of Kalydor will never take away these iniquitous freckles. If we had time all would be well ; and *la pauvre Comtesse* might be spared the sight of these terrible signs of vulgarity ; but without time, a torrent of milk of roses would not efface *ces vilaines taches ; mais consolez vous, ma belle ladi.*' She added, seeing poor Hyacinthe really look discomposed and apprehensive, 'you are very well—very well indeed ; and when you have lived with us some time, you will be quite perfect.

Now you must let me conduct you to miladi your mamma.'

Mademoiselle then gave our heroine's hair a few more twitches, turned her two or three times round to see that all was right, and then with an air of satisfaction led the way.

Poor Hyacinthe trembled violently whilst she followed her conductress to the apartments of Lady Avondale. She was at length, after a few minutes employed in descending the splendid staircase, and traversing a gallery heated by invisible means, ushered by a little page who was lounging on a *fauteuil* at the door, into the boudoir of her mother! What a crowd of tumultuous feelings pressed in the overcharged heart of the agitated Hyacinthe—feelings, which (she already knew sufficient of her mother to be aware) must be smothered, if not wholly subdued.

Lady Avondale was reclining listlessly on a couch, and her lovely person appeared no less attractive than on the preceding evening, though attired simply in a loose morning-gown, and a close lace cap; while Hyacinthe felt that she could approach her with more confidence, gaze on her with less fear, than when she was glittering in all the elegance of dress and diamonds.

Lady Avondale half-raised herself when her

daughter entered ; and on her drawing near to her, took her hand and affectionately kissed her, and then held her from her that she might take an ample survey of her person.

Our poor rustic May stood abashed. Her eyes were cast down and full of tears, her colour was heightened, and her bosom heaved heavily. She longed to throw herself into her mother's arms, to implore her to bless her, and to love her as she had been accustomed to be loved—loved for herself, not for her fragile and exterior beauty. But every word that her mother uttered proved to her too truly that she would be appreciated merely according to outward circumstances, unless from some happy chance her mother's mind should acquire some other tone.

All this pressed rapidly on her thoughts, while Lady Avondale was almost lost in the contemplation of the young creature who stood before her ; and so pensively beautiful was the cast of her countenance, while the attitude which she had unconsciously taken was so perfectly graceful, that the Countess was wrapt in the delight which such a contemplation afforded ; and if her heart was ever susceptible of tender feelings, it was at this present moment.

With her naturally sweet tone of voice, she said,

at the same time making Hyacinthe sit down beside her, 'My dear girl, why do you look so sad? The happiest period of your poor life is now arrived. You must forget all your past privations—all the misery of your former years, for you are now perhaps the most favoured and enviable being in the universe. You have the whole world before you—wealth, rank, youth, and indeed, I rejoice to add, great beauty. What a sensation she will create!' said her ladyship, turning to Mademoiselle. 'People may now be silent about the beauty of Lady Greville's girls. Has she one to compare with mine? My poor sister-in-law must now indeed hide her diminished head!'

At this moment the little page in crimson and gold announced that Lord Avondale's valet had come to inform the Lady Hyacinthe that his lordship waited breakfast for her in the library: with her mother's permission, she not unreluctantly obeyed the summons; and thus ended the first interview with her beauteous parent, and which had filled her whole heart with trepidation and anxiety.

As days passed on, Hyacinthe soon found herself surrounded by every description of instruction.

Two governesses were installed as her immediate preceptresses—a French and Italian lady; for it was soon discovered that her English education had been carefully regulated, and her mind by these means at once refined and enlightened. But this was not sufficient for the ill-judging Lady Avondale. She required that in her daughter should be united all the brilliant acquirements which were alone of value in her worldly eyes; and poor Hyacinthe was speedily made to endure every species of torture, which for the perfect developement of her form, and her initiation into the artificial graces of the *ballet-master*, it was considered necessary should be inflicted. Masters of every description attended her daily; and studies, which, if they had been separately taught, would have been a delight to her, were now too much confounded in the chaos of knowledge and the scientific means for display now forced upon the pupil, for her to benefit by the elaborate instructions lavished upon her.

She was any thing but happy, for she was conscious that she was doing very little good: while the difference of her present life with that she had passed was so very great, that the restrictions and the confinement of it, preyed upon her health and spirits.

All day immured in a gloomy school-room, with no other prospect than blackened leads and smoke-encircled chimneys, how often did Hyacinthe sigh for the lost joys and the liberty of her former life ! How did she pant to breathe the fresh air, to have her eyes regaled by the sight of the flowers, and the green fields of her dear country home !

Her walks were now limited to the dismal square ; where, accompanied by the two stiff, uninteresting women, who were styled her governesses, both discoursing in a language quite unfamiliar to her ear, she found little benefit, and less pleasure, in pacing to and fro the stunted and smoky shrubberies of the monotonous enclosure.

Of her mother she saw very little, and of her father not much more ; for it was but seldom that she was permitted to escape from her prison room to join him in his library.

For Lord Avondale, Hyacinthe felt much affection. His mild, kind manners went directly to her heart, and she longed with the warmth of young and natural feelings to be able to contribute to his happiness, and live in his society. But for her mother, with all her anxious endeavours to entertain for her the affection of a child, she could not tutor her heart to feel that glow of

love and tender veneration which a mother ought to inspire.

This was scarcely to be wondered at ; for the excellent though youthful judgment of poor Hyacinthe could not fail to detect a thousand errors and weaknesses, which a less interested or less unsophisticated observer might have passed unnoticed.

Lady Avondale was at once the most frivolous, and most completely worldly-minded, of her sex. In her intercourse with her daughter, her only aim appeared to make her instrumental to her own vanity ; and if the poor girl, when she appeared before her, looked pale and languid, or less beautiful than usual, she was received with coldness, and dismissed with undissembled disgust. However, of all the miseries she endured, her Sunday trials were by far the most bitter.

Hyacinthe had been brought up in the strictest observance of religion in her late home ; and with the friends of her youth it was made no secondary consideration, but rather was the first, the dearest care of their existence.

Sunday was ever anticipated by them as a day of pious rest—a day which they willingly and joyfully dedicated to that service, which was to them their hope, their solace, throughout their

pilgrimage on earth. How gladly did they prepare for this holy day ! How busy was May on Saturday, preparing every thing for the coming festival, that every unnecessary labour should be abridged, or dispensed with on that sacred day ; and when she arose on Sunday morning, it was with a heart filled with pious gratitude for the blessings she possessed in the advantage of living beneath the spiritual care of such a pastor as Mr. Neville. Neatly attired, how happily did she walk with her supposed parents to the village church ; and there her innocent heart poured forth praises to her God who looketh with peculiar pity upon the young and helpless.

Hyacinthe was always permitted on that day to remain at the Parsonage until after the second service, as she actively assisted Mrs. Villars in the duties of her Sunday School, for which she felt much interest.

What a contrast were her waking feelings, the first Sunday morning she passed in Grosvenor Square ! After the almost stunning confusion of the week she had spent, she looked forward to Sunday as at least a day of rest : but on awaking, Hyacinthe's ears were assailed with sounds the same as usual ; as much of the busy avocations of the extensive household seemed renewed ; as

much business and activity among the under servants ; as much *exigeance* and idly-performed duties of the upper. Lady Avondale's page still lounged in his velvet chair, listlessly reading the Court Journal. Monsieur Vol-au-vent still gossiped in the hall with the porter, occasionally whistling a mazurka ; while the same elaborate meal was spread on the breakfast-table, with all the splendid appointments which usually decorated it, and not even the daily papers were omitted ? Every thing passed the same, and no one said ' It is Sunday !'

Her own French maid could give her no information as to the movements of the family ; but Hyacinthe requested her to ask Mademoiselle Victorine at what hour her Lady went to church. The answer to this question was a shrug of the shoulders, ' Ah, ciel ! miladi seldom goes to church ; she too delicate !'

Hyacinthe recollected with a sigh, that her mother had been at the Opera the night before !

The distressed girl then descended to the breakfast room, where she found Lord Avondale : and with a face which betrayed no small degree of anxiety, she asked whether he had the intention of going to church.

' To be sure, my little daughter, we will go

together to day,' he answered, with a smile, as he rang the bell; and after he had ordered the carriage, added kindly, that he should soon swallow his coffee, when he would immediately complete his toilet, and be in readiness to accompany her.

'But do you not always go to church, dear papa?' said Hyacinthe, in a tone of inquietude.

'Do not be too inquisitive about my concerns, you grave little monitress,' answered Lord Avondale, smiling at her earnestness, but inwardly satisfied with the good feeling it evinced: 'I shall go much oftener, now I have you for my companion.'

'How happy that will make me!' said Hyacinthe joyfully; 'for, my dearest papa, I have been taught to make the exercise of religion so *very dear* an object—to consider it of *such vital* importance—that to see those I love neglect it, terrifies and afflicts me.'

Lord Avondale sighed, and soon after left the room to prepare for church.

How little analogy did the London chapel offer, to which Hyacinthe was conducted, with the country church which from her earliest recollections she had been accustomed to attend! and tears started from her eyes when she heard the service

commenced and read by a strange voice, instead of those revered tones which had always inspired her with feelings of devotion and love. With a timid glance she directed her eyes to the reading desk, and there in lieu of her own venerable pastor—the guide of her youth, and the model of every virtue—beheld a dapper youth, his hair arranged in the most studied manner, mincing forth sounds which appeared to her ear but little calculated to inspire devotion. Instead of the simple and pious congregation, with whom she used to mingle her prayers, she beheld on all sides a wilderness of bonnets, and flowers, and feathers ; while the whole scene appeared to her more like one of her mother's gay drawing-rooms than a place set apart for divine worship.

A fine-toned organ and good singing delighted and charmed her very soul ; and the sermon was delivered by a popular preacher of some merit, whose discourse impressed deeply on her heart ; but how truly was she surprised and disgusted by the scene which took place immediately upon the congregation rising from their knees ! Whispering, smiling, nodding, was then the order of the day. She heard one lady say to another, ‘ What a beautiful colour your pelisse is ! ’—while her neighbour in a loud whisper remarked, ‘ How

exceedingly full the Opera was last night !—how well Taglioni danced the new pas Russe !’ Another old lady exclaimed, at the same time yawning terrifically, ‘ How dreadfully long the sermon was ! It is a great shame that any one should take the liberty of detaining a congregation more than twenty minutes !’

Hyacinthe felt quite shocked, and turned pale with amazement ; almost beginning to fancy that she had entered the modern Babylon.

Our heroine’s life had been so retired, her education so strict, that she could scarcely believe the evidence of her eyes and ears : and she returned home grave and dejected. Her heart was full of sorrow and heaviness ; for how could she hope to obtain that future happiness, to which she had been taught to look forward with such joy, if she were destined to live among those, who although they might know there was a God, appeared neither to fear nor to love him ?

Hyacinthe was endeavoring to lose these anxious thoughts in the perusal of a book of devotion, the gift of her revered Mr. Neville, when she received a summons from Lady Avondale to desire her to be in readiness to accompany her in a drive. She asked eagerly if it would prevent her from attending the afternoon service ; and was

still more unhappy when she found that it certainly would, and that very few people ever thought of doing such a thing as to go to church twice in the same day in London.

Poor Hyacinthe feared to disobey her mother ; and, after allowing herself to be attired in a beautiful new dress and bonnet, accompanied Lady Avondale to pay some visits. They then went into the Park, and finished the afternoon in Kensington Gardens.

Adulation and admiration were poured into her ears from every side. Her romantic history rendered her the topic of conversation and curiosity to all ranks, and her great beauty of course heightened the interest which was naturally felt for her.

Lady Avondale was provoked and angry with her lovely daughter, and she could not comprehend why she looked so sad in the midst of so much happiness. At first she attributed it to timidity, and then to ill-temper ; and vented her spleen in invectives against the good people who had educated her, who, she said, had infected her with such grovelling ideas, that it took away all her pleasure in having recovered her.

Poor Hyacinthe's unhappiness was thus increased ; she grieved to find herself unloved by

her mother, who she found, with deep sorrow, would never enter into her feelings upon the subject of the want of enjoyment of her present life.

Her Sunday was ended in being again most elegantly attired, and brought forward at a large evening party, given by Lady Avondale on purpose to display to the admiring world the beauty of her daughter.

What a Sabbath for the pious Mary to spend. And when, at length, she was allowed to retire for the night, which was not until a very late hour, she was so tired, so subdued, that her evening devotions were not as they used to be, but poured forth in bitterness and sadness of spirit.

CHAPTER XIV.

‘Peace, murmuring spirit! bruised and writhing still,
Confess the living fount of life is near:
Take up thy cross, repine not at the will
Which bids thee meekly bow, and calmly bear the pain!’

WE shall now leave our heroine for a short period, and take a retrospective glance at the inhabitants of the village in which she had spent so many happy days—days of childhood and joy; such as never come after the quick pulse of youth is lowered by the cares and anxieties of approaching maturity,—after the sunny brow of childhood is clouded by the consciousness of the responsibilities of life, and we ‘look upon the dial’s hand, and note that hours are passing.’

Grief had laid its heavy hand upon the once cheerful occupants of Brookside Farm. The loss of the darling May was a bereavement felt most bitterly, not only by them, but also by the excellent rector and his sister; and, although they

endeavoured to console the good farmer and his wife, tears, most bitter tears, mingled themselves with every soothing word they uttered.

Their little paradise had now lost its chief attraction—the gentle being who had formed so great an object of delight was removed far from them, and was now only as a dream of the past. She had vanished entirely from the eyes which had so loved to dwell upon her; and like a sweet perfume, or a sweeter melody, which passes away, leaving only the memory of the enjoyment, with the sad knowledge that it cannot be recalled. It is true that this treasure of their affections still lived for others; but for them they felt, with a deep regret, that she was gone for ever!

Lord Avondale had taken the earliest opportunity of informing Mr. Neville that the Countess's views and ideas were such, that she would never allow her daughter any personal communication with those who were not of her own rank in life. Mr. Neville could only acquiesce in the wishes his lordship's words were meant to convey, and instruct his sister of the barrier raised between her and her idolized May.

In the quiet and retired life they led, the lovely and virtuous girl had been an unceasing object

of interest and excitement ; and sadly did Mrs. Villars now pursue her morning's employment, unbroken by the presence of this child of their adoption. Habit and affection made her start, and her heart beat, whenever a footstep was heard about the time that she was accustomed to see her dear pupil, who never entered the rectory but with a countenance beaming with delight ; not only at the idea of spending some hours with her revered friends, but also from the real pleasure she took in the improving, and to her delightful, studies, through which she was conducted by Mrs. Villars and her brother.

This excellent lady now felt a void—a blank which could not be filled up ; and well did she enter into the feelings of the afflicted family at the farm, although she was aware she had less to deplore than them. Though it would be an altered intercourse, she believed she might be allowed to see the Lady Hyacinthe again ; but she felt that their lowly station was an insuperable objection to the renewal of the affectionate familiarity hearts like theirs could alone be contented with.

Mrs. Villars had made it her first care, immediately on Hyacinthe's departure, to send Susan Ashfield to the farm ; and a small sum of money

easily persuaded her mother to dispense with her services for a short period.

Susan was an excellent girl, and most anxious to be of use to the friends of her beloved and youthful mistress. They were sensible of her well-meant endeavours; but what could compensate to them for what they had lost?

The farmer had long been in a delicate state of health, although his ailments had scarcely confined him to the house; he was, however, now threatened with a malady which too often proves fatal to those whom it attacks.

Mrs. Villars, on repairing to the farm a few mornings after the afflicting departure of Hyacinthe, witnessed a scene which contributed much to the depressed state of her spirits.

The agitation and grief caused by the separation from the young and idolized being who had twined so closely round his heart, had brought on a violent fit of spasms; and poor Farmer Wilmot, after a night of intense suffering, was now seated in his arm-chair, pale and languid,—and with such evident and touching marks of sorrow in his countenance, that Mrs. Villars was obliged to turn away to conceal the tears with which sympathy filled her eyes.

At this moment she felt that she was unable

to address one word of comfort to the poor mourner ; therefore Mrs. Villars inquired of Susan, where she might find Mrs. Wilmot ; and on being told that she was up-stairs, she immediately went in search of her, and discovered the poor woman seated upon the bed in the little room formerly occupied by May, weeping most bitterly.

‘My good friend,’ said Mrs. Villars, kindly and soothingly, ‘you must indeed endeavour to shake off this violent affliction, and rouse yourself to enable you to enter into your customary occupations. I have come to beg that you and your husband will come to the rectory and pass the day ; the change will do you good.’

‘No, madam,’ sobbed out poor Mrs. Wilmot ; ‘I thank you most kindly, but at present I like no place but this. I love to look upon the seat on which my darling sat—at the bed on which she lay : nothing consoles me but what reminds me of her. It is a sorrow which soothes my mind.’

‘But for your husband, my dear Jane, for his sake you must endeavour to reconcile yourself to the loss you have met with,’ said Mrs. Villars, with gentleness and compassion in her voice.

‘Ah! madam—and it is for him that my heart doubly bleeds,’ replied poor Mrs. Wilmot, with the most poignant distress expressed in her countenance. ‘No one can imagine how fondly—how distractedly he doted upon that child; and you do not know how much his health has been declining lately—so that I much fear now that he will no longer have a motive for exertion, he will sink into a state of listlessness and confirmed ill health. As long as we possessed our dear child, he never would give up: he used to say if disinclined to go out, ‘I must work, or how will our May’s little fortune go on?’—and he never willingly thought of himself whilst she remained to us. We have now far too much for ourselves. Our interest in life is over for ever; and now all we have to do is to sit down and wish for the hour when it shall please the Almighty to take us from hence.’

‘This is very wrong, my good friend,’ replied Mrs. Villars; ‘you are still in the prime of life. You have probably many days still before you. Do you not think it would be a sin for you to spend them in uselessness? Hitherto your life has been one of great, and almost uninterrupted happiness: such was never intended to be the lot of human beings; and we must ever be pre-

pared for the dispensations of our God, and bend with submission to his decrees. He brings us sorrow to awaken us from our vain and foolish dreams of security and self-confidence, in order that we may become more deeply acquainted with the fulness of grace and mercy that dwelleth in Christ Jesus.' Mrs. Villars paused for a few moments, and then continued with a mournful intonation of voice, 'This lesson, my good Jane, is often most effectually learnt under the pressure of intense affliction. I speak most feelingly. There was a time when I enjoyed happiness the most pure and heavenly—happiness which I vainly thought might last for ever. But the cup of joy was dashed from my lips—I had to behold the destruction of my dearest hopes—my heart's fondest wishes ; yet here I am calm, and I trust fully resigned to the will of God.' Again Mrs. Villars paused, her emotion being too deep for utterance. After a short silence, she again continued ; — 'When visited with acute personal affliction, or suffering under the removal of a beloved object, we are awakened to a touching conviction of our utter helplessness,—to a strong sense of the precarious tenure of our earthly blessings ; and we begin to perceive that God is every thing, and man nothing. It is then that

we look round for some 'city of refuge' in which we may take shelter. We cast an anxious and timid glance upon past months and years ; and listen, perhaps for the first time, to the reproachful voice of conscience : it is then, that remembering the indifference with which we have received, and the ingratitude with which we have wasted the rich gifts of Providence, we seek to approach God in penitence and prayer.'

'Ah ! madam, I feel every word that you utter, and I shall indeed endeavour to show you that they have not been spoken to an unmindful ear : let me convince you that your kindness has not been bestowed in vain—let me go to my husband, that my calmness and resignation may induce him to master his grief—though I fear, alas ! that his failing health renders him less capable of struggling with his feelings.'

Indeed Mrs. Villars felt seriously uneasy when she again saw Farmer Wilmot. Mr. Neville was seated by his side, and had been administering to him all the comfort which it was in his power to bestow ; but he complained of pain and weariness, which arose from bodily as well as mental suffering.

A messenger had been despatched for a doctor, who, after seeing his patient, communicated to

Mr. Neville his fear that he had certainly a complaint of the heart, of long standing, and which was a disease which generally baffled all medical aid. He, however, bled him ; and, prescribing quiet and repose, begged that his mind might be left as tranquil as possible.

At this moment this was a hard task to perform ; but every attention which an attached wife could bestow, and every kindness which friendship and sympathizing feelings could suggest, he received from the benevolent Rector and his sister.

He had the further comfort of welcoming the most tender and affectionate letter from his dear child, which he still continued to call her.

Hyacinthe was permitted to correspond with her friends at the Rectory ; and also to write to the parents who had so tenderly nurtured the lovely child of their adoption. This was most soothing to them, while proving to her, her only pure source of happiness.

In a short time there were no more lamentations to be heard at the farm, and tears were no longer seen streaming down the cheeks of the honest Wilmot and his wife ; while to the casual observer every thing seemed to go on as heretofore.

They were now resigned to their loss, although their sad hearts were still oppressed and full of grief ; but they remembered from whom their present trial was sent, and bowed their heads meekly to the will of God. Such is the power of faith and real religion !

CHAPTER XV.

‘Then let the sands of existence fall,
 The current of life flow fast ;
 Our times are in God’s own hands, and all—
 All will be well at last.’

WE must now return to the Lady Hyacinthe, and follow her through the privations and vexations connected with the new situation in which she was placed ; at the same time that we describe the enjoyments with which Providence strews the path which is even the most distasteful to us.

It was a great relief to Hyacinthe, when her mother (having made an exhibition of her, until she was tired of hearing eulogiums and flattering expressions which were not addressed immediately to herself,) resigned her wholly to her governesses ; telling her that she must now work hard, and endeavour to make up for lost time, by acquiring what was really useful in the world, instead of cant phrases and antiquated ways only fit for a Methodist, and certainly not for a young lady of rank and fashion.

Thus poor Hyacinthe was consigned completely

to the charge of her governesses, and to the masters who assisted them in imparting the numerous accomplishments conceived essential to her station in life : and unless it was that she occasionally breakfasted with Lord Avondale, and was permitted now and then to take a walk with him, her life was one of uniform dulness, and wearisome application to studies, whose endless variety were sources of considerable embarrassment.

Lord Avondale indeed was kindness itself ; and had it only depended on him, his Hyacinthe would have been his dear and constant companion ; but he had been so long accustomed to succumb to every wish and caprice of his imperious Countess, that even in this most interesting and important subject he weakly acquiesced, and that too against his better judgment. Yet he beheld with deep though unavailing regret, the thralldom his child endured—a thralldom the more vexatious, insomuch that it was injudicious, and could not possibly tend to any desirable result.

Lord Avondale kindly indulged and seconded Hyacinthe's wish of being tenderly mindful and attentive to her beloved friends in the country ; and scarcely ever did she return from a walk with him without having selected some present which

should speak of her affectionate recollection of the kind protectors of her childhood. All the newest and choicest publications were regularly sent to the Rectory—an arrival most precious to Mr. Neville ; and eagerly did she endeavour to suit each taste in her careful selection of gifts for the individuals so every way dear to her. Lord Avondale's wishes for gratifying her were boundless, while he was equally anxious with herself to testify his own gratitude to her valuable friends. .

We may say that it was Hyacinthe's only delight to be enabled to send package after package filled with treasures, sometimes directed to the Farm, and sometimes to the Rectory ; while the letters she was suffered to send with them were a gratification, that for the moment made her forget all the irksomeness of her present life. Still a deep regret would mingle itself with the pleasure she experienced in this correspondence with the friends of her childish years ; it was also perceptible in their letters, notwithstanding their mutual endeavours to conceal the feelings of sadness which still rested on their hearts.

One acute source of affliction to the anxious girl was the hint, which, though obscurely given, conveyed too plainly to her mind, that her dear

foster-father's health was certainly declining. What would she not have given to have flown to him, and to have rendered him that attendance which an affectionate child would know so well how to bestow ! ' He only wants me,' she would often mentally exclaim ; ' if I were with him, he should soon be well—I know so well how to nurse him—he misses me, dear darling father—he longs to see his own little May, and that is the reason of his illness—I was sure he could not live without me.'

But she knew how vain were all her ardent wishes upon the subject : happiness like that was not within her reach.

Thus time passed on ; but little variation took place in the life of Hyacinthe. As her talents were naturally excellent, she could not avoid benefitting much by the instructions she received ; and although the views of Lady Avondale were in a measure defeated by the ill-judged variety of the studies which she wished her daughter to embark in, still the intelligent Hyacinthe made considerable advancement, and surpassed even her mother's expectations in music and French. There was also this advantage in the studies so diligently pursued,—her mind was kept constantly occupied ; and it was only in the twilight

of the spring evenings, or when her young cheek pressed the pillow of down prepared for the heiress of the Earl of Avondale, that the humble-hearted May could revert in memory to the friends so tenderly beloved, or trace with mental vision the dear and lovely scenes from which she had been so forcibly withdrawn.

One morning Hyacinthe received a message from Lady Avondale, desiring her to be ready to accompany her in the carriage, as she intended to introduce her to her aunt Lady Greville, and her cousins. Poor Hyacinthe was again in distress. She had often heard the Countess allude to this aunt; and it was always with a degree of sarcasm and dislike, which latter feeling was unconsciously imparted to her; and she had rather rejoiced at the delay which had as yet deferred her presentation to this unknown relative.

Hyacinthe expected she must be something very awful, very repulsive—that she should again have to undergo the unfeeling scrutiny she had suffered from her mother, and one or two of her high-born connections—in short that she should find her aunt a fine lady!—and, as the carriage stopped at one of the most splendid houses in London, and they were ushered in with the usual

pomp of servants and retinue, our heroine trembled with the expectation of finding renewed ostentation and worldly-mindedness

They were told that her ladyship was in her morning-room, and into that apartment (using the privilege of near relations) they were introduced.

What a surprise and relief to Hyacinthe was the scene which the interior of that room offered ! Lady Greville was working, and by her side sat one of her daughters reading aloud. Two other sweet-looking girls were busily employed with their drawing ; whilst a pretty child of six years old, the youngest pet of the family, sat on an ottoman at her mother's feet, eagerly endeavouring to emulate her mamma's abilities in the working department, by constructing a little cotton petticoat for some infant pensioner.

Lady Greville, advancing, kindly received Lady Avondale, and most affectionately embraced the nervous Hyacinthe ; and, taking her by the hand, introduced her to her cousins, who all came forward with countenances beaming with amiability and kindness of heart.

Hyacinthe was almost overcome with the feeling of comfort and happiness which this unlooked-for reception yielded her ; and when

she looked into the countenance of her aunt, (which, though not possessing the dazzling beauty of her mother, owned the utmost degree of sweetness, intelligence, and benevolence,) she could scarcely refrain from throwing herself into her arms, and beseeching her to love and cherish her as she had been loved and cherished by those friends whose remembrance was forcibly called to her mind by thus finding the heart's affections, and tenderness of manner, not wholly confined to the village of Fairbrook.

Hyacinthe's ideas of what is technically termed 'high life,' were very much limited ; and we fear, from what she had witnessed since her inauguration to the distinguished station to which she was born, not very exalted. It is true that she could feel most strongly the wide distinction between the simple and rustic home she had left, with the splendid one she now inhabited ; but the contrast was all in favour of the virtuous poverty and rational enjoyments of former days ; while her well-regulated mind shrunk with intuitive dread from all around her ; which certainly betrayed the condemned pomps and vanities of this world, without offering any of the intrinsic advantages and blessings which wealth and power may give, if properly

appreciated and employed. Under the present influence of her feelings, it might indeed appear to her difficult for a 'rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven ;' but she did not then reflect that it is the misapplication, not the possession, of worldly advantages, which will exclude the prosperous man from the mansions of everlasting bliss,—and that wealth and exalted rank, when *used* without being *abused*, only tend to make virtue shine more brilliantly, while the force of righteous example is rendered more beneficial from being more conspicuous and extended.

Thus it was in the Greville family. High in birth and fortune, they were models of worth and excellence. Warmly and devotedly attached to their children, truly devout and earnest in the exercise of their religion, they led a life of social and intellectual enjoyment; offering to the observation of others the gratifying spectacle of excessive refinement of taste with simplicity of heart, extensive liberality with strict economy of expenditure, and pre-eminent piety with cheerfulness and humility of demeanour. The station of Lord Greville brought him into public life, which rendered a residence in London therefore indispensable. In consequence, though with much regret, his family removed every year for

some months to the metropolis, leaving their beautiful country residence with lively sorrow ; for that was their sphere, the scene of their best enjoyments, and not the crowded, dissipated, and sin-sheltering town. However, Lady Greville felt it was an imperious duty scrupulously to comply with all the exactions which her position in life demanded. She therefore took her part in society, though carefully avoiding all collision with the dissipated circles ; and, while receiving to her magnificent and *recherche* entertainments all those rendered illustrious at once by birth and virtue, or the estimable and talented of the untitled portion of society, vice was strictly excluded ; and even the merely indiscreet vainly sought for invitations to those *reunions*, which with exquisite arrangements for entertainment, boasted a spirit of exclusiveness few have the firmness to assert,—I mean the exclusiveness of irreproachable moral conduct. With these precautions, that nothing culpable should come within the scope of her daughters' intercourse with society, they entered the world with minds so well-regulated, that they tasted with mirth and gladness of the amusements which presented themselves, without being deluded or perverted by them ; and, by their tender mother's care

spared the dangerous influence and example of those who rush wildly into pleasure from evil passions, from worldly calculations, or from sad vacuity of mind : they found in the brilliant ball, the exquisite concert, the splendid opera, all the enjoyment that youth should feel, without dreaming that a *second*, or unworthy, motive for delight could be experienced. Still, among all the well-selected recreations which their London hours afforded, they maintained a decided preference for the simple and refined pleasures of the country, — pleasures which their excellent education fitted them eminently and truly to enjoy.

Lady Greville, while entering the brilliant scenes of ostentatious display, and sacrificing precious hours to the claims of the gay world, — both alike distasteful to her, but persisted in from the consideration that it was presumptuous and wrong to shrink from those duties which she could plainly see were incumbent on her position in this life, — hailed with heartfelt satisfaction the evident predilection evinced by her children for the pure and domestic joys of their country home. It would have been inconsistent with her sense of justice to have insisted on the necessity of seclusion and retirement to young females,

whose tastes led them into the busy circles of pleasure, and whose future life might place them amongst them : and had such been her daughters' choice, with the armour of true religion, and the love of God deeply rooted in their hearts, she would have trusted that the trials offered by the dissipation of the world should prove tests of faith and virtue, instead of the fatal stumbling-blocks they so often become. But as it was, Lady Greville was spared the anxiety the ordeal might have cost her ; and found, with a deep sense of thankfulness, that the young beings consigned by Providence to her charge, had already learnt, by her precepts and example, that true happiness is only to be found in the exercise of Christian duties ; and that, already discerning the emptiness of indiscriminate society and the palling nature of the glare and bustle of fashionable life, they returned to scenes of tranquillity and retirement equally delighted with herself, there to partake of the pure and precious joy arising from the best affections of the heart, the enlightenment of the mind, and an uninterrupted worship of their Almighty Father.

CHAPTER XVI.

' 'Tis in the silence, in the shade,
That light from Heaven illumines our road ;
And man, even mortal man, is made,
If not a God—almost a God.'

HYACINTHE had soon an opportunity of forming a judgment much more favourable of the high-born inhabitants of the metropolis, than that which had filled her ideas before her acquaintance with the Greville family.

A fever of a very malignant nature attacked one of the servants of Lord Avondale's establishment ; and he, as well as Lady Avondale, were too happy to avail themselves of Lady Greville's considerate offer of taking Hyacinthe into her own house, whilst her brother and sister-in-law paid some visits previous to their settling for the autumn at Avondale Castle ; by these means avoiding the hazard of infection.

Lady Greville and her family were to remain a fortnight longer in London, from whence they

were to proceed to their own home in the country ; and it was arranged that after remaining a short time there, Hyacinthe was to rejoin her parents and governesses at the seat of her ancestors.

With unfeigned joy did Hyacinthe prepare to accompany her aunt to Park Lane, although her pleasure suffered some alloy from the idea of leaving her indulgent and courtly father.

Lady Avondale coldly bade her adieu ; requesting at the same time that she would take care of her complexion, and never forget to wear her gloves. ‘I have had a great deal of trouble,’ added this *anxious* parent, ‘to civilize your appearance, therefore pray be good enough to follow up my plans ; and, if possible, spare me the disgrace of having a daughter with an odious freckled or tanned skin, with the plebeian accompaniment of coarse hands.’

‘Your aunt,’ her ladyship proceeded to say, ‘is a very improper person for you to be with, though this frightful typhus makes it a matter of necessity. She places very little importance in these matters, as little Eugenia’s ruddy face may show ; and I must desire that you will take care not to add any of her strange notions to those you have unfortunately already acquired.’

The announcement of Lady Greville's arrival interrupted this singular lecture ; and Hyacinthe bounded joyfully into her aunt's carriage, with more elasticity of movement than she had displayed since her arrival in London.

How kindly she was received by her uncle and cousins ! Her poor heart, which had been almost frozen by the coldness she had met with, since she had quitted the tender friends of her childhood, glowed again with its natural warmth under the influence of their affectionate manners.

These kind relations had soon discovered that Hyacinthe possessed no common character. They encouraged her to speak of her former life ; and much were they interested and touched by her little history, entering most fully into all her feelings connected with the subject.

At Greville House, Hyacinthe beheld indeed a truly happy family ; and it was here she found the realization of every blessing that can be desired in this life. However, the excess of earthly felicity had not engendered indifference, as in too many cases ; or negligence in the observance of the duties from which no station exempts us. Lady Greville had taught her family to reflect that we have each an allotted part to sustain—appropriate engagements to fulfil—peculiar vir-

tues to exercise—an immortal destiny to accomplish. She bade them consider that the flowery path and the rugged way were equally the appointments of God; but, as prosperity was their lot, they should partake of it with gratitude, every remembering the hand from which it flowed. It was also impressed on their minds that, as the gift of God, wealth is to be enjoyed gratefully and liberally, as one of the means of usefulness derived from the bounty of Heaven: but, like every other talent committed to our care, an exact account must be rendered unto Him, who while He giveth liberally, requires the most minute fidelity in the trust. In that parable of our Saviour, of the ten pieces of money, the nobleman, who vests the charge in his servants expressly declares, ‘Occupy until I come.’ By these memorable words, a day of account is strikingly referred to; and it was to that event Lady Greville most earnestly directed her children’s minds, in order that their every action should be governed by a reference to that ordeal which all must pass.

With these judicious counsels, and words of holy wisdom, Lady Greville had formed the hearts of her children to rejoice only in the exercise of virtue; and it is not to be wondered

at that their domestic circle was one purely and eminently happy. Here was wealth and rank without one spark of ostentation : religion in the purest form, unmixed with gloom or narrow-mindedness ; affection of the most devoted kind amongst all its members.

The education of the young ladies was conducted in the most delightful manner. Their governess was a sensible, excellent person, who went hand in hand with Lady Greville in her system with her pupils. The school-room opened into Lady Greville's morning room, and the studies were superintended by her, and farther assisted by masters. She placed very little stress on mere accomplishments, her desire being that the understanding of her children should be cultivated and well directed ; but, if they evinced any decided taste or wish to pursue any peculiar study, she was too happy to have the power of assisting their inclinations by the best instructions.

Hyacinthe was most charmed to be allowed to join the cheerful, joyful party at study in the morning ; and so judiciously were those studies directed, that the hours passed delightfully, and much too swiftly. How different from the dull routine of ordinary school-rooms ! As a mother's

eye—a mother's judgment was every thing; every lesson was appropriated to the capacity and taste of the pupil; and consequently each acquirement was achieved with facility and comfort. This was following nature and reason, instead of custom and fashion, and the result showed the good sense of the arrangements.

The morning after Hyacinthe's arrival, one of her cousins came to her before she had quitted her room, and begged to know whether she would like to join the family at prayers. Most willingly she followed her conductress to the apartment where all the household were assembled for the presenting a morning sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving to their God!

Lord and Lady Greville considered it one of their most important duties to erect a 'family altar,' in their house, and with their assembled children and dependants, call upon the name of the Lord. They were not content with their own private devotions, leaving those whom God had brought beneath their roof to live and die in ignorance of Him who 'truly to know is life eternal.' They also felt that they did not possess one reasonable excuse for not being able to spare a single half hour for God; and no unholy shame of being thought too earnest in religion, or the

fear of the 'world's dread laugh' ever prompted them to neglect these pious duties. It is too often that the mockery of man is the cause of our neglect of God; but this is the weakest, the most unworthy plea that can be urged in extenuation of the omission of family prayer—an omission that occasions our losing the greatest and purest of comforts—that of acknowledging with one accord the mercies he has bestowed upon us, and petitioning together for a continuance of his blessings; while with one voice we confess our sins with open and acknowledged humility.

In the family of Lord Greville the immediate reward of righteousness was plainly to be discovered in the domestic harmony and union which was its striking feature, and in the ever-increasing sense of religion in themselves and their household. We may be assured that this zealous performance of duty towards our God will not, nor cannot want a blessing: for it stands not alone, but brings with it every other virtue.

How happily did the fortnight glide on to Hyacinthe! She was now the joyous, cheerful being she had once been before she became rich and great. Her kind relatives were anxious to

amuse as well as instruct her, and Hyacinthe, who had as yet seen nothing of London besides the parks and the streets at the west end of the town, was amazed and delighted by the sight of those objects of national splendour which it was their first care to enable her to inspect; and it was with surprise and pleasure she reviewed each monument of art, each stupendous specimen of the finest architecture, each museum teeming with the treasures of the old and new world, and which until now she had only known by those studies which had referred to them.

Much as she loved the country, Hyacinthe felt sorry when the time arrived for her to quit London. She dreaded any change from the happiness she was then enjoying. Besides, the time would be drawing near when she was to return home; for her imperious mother had only given permission for her to remain one fortnight at Beechwood; and already her heart sunk within her at the idea of leaving her newly-acquired friends. They were all so good—so kind—father, mother, the son, and the daughters, were all alike estimable in their different characters.

The day fixed for the departure of the family for the country at length arrived; and great

was the joy expressed by every branch of it. They were going home—to their own dear home, to all the pursuits and pleasures so delightful to them. London was their trial ; it did not suit any of their tastes ; but to be with their father reconciled them to any thing ; and Lady Greville would have considered a paradise a desert without the presence of her dear and excellent husband.

If Hyacinthe considered this family happy in London, what did she think when she contemplated them at Beechwood ? It was a beautiful place, situated in one of the loveliest counties in England. The house, the very palace of comfort ; while the little village, scattered near the park-gates, was picturesque, and its thatched cottages were pictures of neatness.

It was a touching and gratifying sight to witness the reception which the family received. Every individual appeared to feel that they were welcoming their dearest friends. Each cottager flew to his door to wave his hat, and catch one glance from the eye of one of the members of this beloved family.

Then the joy of the young people to revisit all their possessions in the shape of flower-gardens, poultry-yards, aviary, ponies, dogs, and

all the treasures which made their country pleasures so abundant.

They had been met at the hall-door by the clergyman of the parish ; and it brought tears down the cheeks of Hyacinthe to witness their meeting with this most excellent person. Each cousin embraced him most cordially and affectionately. He was to them a very dear friend ; one who had been their spiritual guide and monitor ; and who had ably assisted their parents in leading them into the paths of virtue and goodness : and, as Hyacinthe beheld the tenderness of his greeting to them, she thought of her own loved Mr. Neville, and felt that in Mr. Coventry she beheld the union of all those perfection^s which distinguished him. The vicarage was close to the park gates, as well as the simple village-church ; but they were both gothic structures of a very ancient date, and by their venerable and picturesque character, formed rather pleasing ornaments, than deteriorated by their vicinity from the imposing aspect of Beechwood.

Many were the questions poured into Mr. Coventry's ears by the young beings who crowded round him, relative to all their pensioners, and those inhabitants of the village, in whom they took most interest, their school, their clothing-

club, and all the various institutions of usefulness and relief for the neighbouring poor, of which they were the chief supporters and managers.

The next day, when Hyacinthe accompanied her cousins to the village, it was a beautiful sight to witness the joy which their presence inspired. They were greeted by young and old, in every house with the most respectful delight, and looked upon as harbingers of comfort and relief.

Lady Greville had taught her daughters not to be merely satisfied by coldly relieving the temporal wants of their fellow-creatures ; that is easily done where the means are abundant ; but the charity she inculcated was that of soothing the afflicted, whether their sufferings proceeded from mental or bodily anguish ; and, young as they were, she encouraged them to occupy their well-directed minds with the essential and ulterior improvement of the poor.

This was done in great humility, and never in a manner likely to offend, but under the cognizance and guidance of Mr. Coventry ; and these amiable girls had the heartfelt joy of beholding the success of their plan for the benefit of the distressed.

Youth is the season for kind and warm emo-

tions ; and in this sphere of probation, in which sickness, sorrow and suffering so much abound, opportunities of exercising Christian love can neither be few nor rare ; and Lady Greville was most anxious to impress upon the minds of her children that they are never *too young* to fulfil duties of this nature.

The heart is easily touched by distress, and melts at the sight of human misery ; and let me admonish my young readers to cherish these emotions ; but let them not mistake feelings for virtues, nor dwell with too much complacency upon casual acts of kindness which may have cost no personal sacrifice. Real emotions of charity must prompt you to exertion and self-denial, blended with the principle of Christian love ; and these actions by repetition will be wrought into habits until they become permanent graces of the soul.

CHAPTER XVII.

‘ Some measure of evil seems to be necessary in the present state of man, for his discipline and improvement, and to prepare him for higher enjoyment ; nor have we any reason to think more is permitted than is necessary for these valuable purposes.’

By her residence at Beechwood the mind of Hyacinthe became more deeply impressed with the opinion of the exquisite felicity enjoyed by its inhabitants ; nor could she discover one drawback that any had to the perfect happiness of their lot ; but she felt they highly merited it all ; and her heart rejoiced at the prospect of its continuance. A short time after her arrival she was walking with her aunt quite alone, and she could not help expressing to her all she felt upon the subject.

‘ My dear aunt,’ she said, ‘ I always thought that uninterrupted happiness was not to be the lot of human beings ; yet in vain have I endea-

voured to discover what is your trial ; for nowhere can I perceive it.'

Lady Greville smiled : but in that smile was mingled a grave and touching sadness. At last, after a pause, she said, ' Follow me, Hyacinthe, and I will show you that the Almighty is too wise, too just, not to dispense afflictions upon all his servants ; in mercy and infinite wisdom convincing us, that this world at best is not to be one of unmixed felicity.'

Lady Greville led the way in silence until they came to the church. Having arrived there, she opened a small side-door, by a key which she carried about her ; and, entering with Hyacinthe, she told her to follow. When she had reached the middle of the aisle she stopped, and desired her anxious companion to read the inscription upon a plain white marble tablet which was placed upon the wall of the church. Hyacinthe run her eye hastily over it, and beheld these words : ' Sacred to the memory of Henry and Percy Mansfield, twin sons of George Barton Greville, and Mary his wife—Henry died, aged 10 years, January 5th, 18—, and Percy followed his brother on the 2nd of the ensuing April.

' Early, bright, transient, pure as morning dew,

They sparkled, were exhaled, and went to heaven !'

Hyacinthe felt inexpressibly shocked and distressed. She looked at her aunt in fear and trembling ; but she was calm, though very pale.

‘ My dear girl,’ she at length said, in a low, but clear voice, seating herself upon a bench opposite the monument, and desiring Hyacinthe to do the same—‘ you have so lately entered your own family, that you are scarcely acquainted with the minutes of its history. I do not think you are even aware that Augustus is your uncle’s son by a former marriage ; indeed I sometimes almost forget the circumstance, so dearly do I love him. I never had a son besides those two beloved children whose death you there see recorded. They were twins, and always evidenced much delicacy of constitution. Perhaps that circumstance made me regard them with peculiar tenderness ; but certainly they were most interesting boys. The Almighty had adorned them with every degree of loveliness. I can see them now in my mind’s eye, with their bright joyous countenances, their curling hair and beautiful complexions, sporting in happy play together, or seated with an arm round each other’s neck, learning at the same time their task, or reading for their amusement out of the same book. Their attachment to each other was the strongest

I ever beheld. They were never separate, and all their little possessions appeared considered by them as their joint property. Certainly they were the joy and happiness of my life—my sunshine, my dearest delight ; and much, alas ! I fear too much, was my heart engaged by these two treasures. And yet not only I, but every one loved them ; they were so affectionate—so good ! Well,’ continued Lady Greville, after a sad pause, which was interrupted by a torrent of tears, ‘ I must finish my melancholy story. The scarlet fever, that scourge of families, attacked my children ; all my girls had the complaint slightly and most favourably. Henry sickened, and, oh ! wretched moment—never to be forgotten !—he died in torture in my arms. Percy, who was a stronger child, lived through the disease, but never got over the effects of it. He lingered some months ; but of one circumstance I am almost certain—that grief for the loss of his treasured brother really caused his death. He was a child possessing the strongest affections ; and his mind and health previously weakened by all he had suffered, it was evident wanted strength to reconcile himself to the loss of his second self. It would be impossible for me to describe to you the happy frame of mind in which this adored child at last died. He was perfectly resigned to the idea of leaving this

world ; and so heaven-ward were his ideas directed, that the humble hope which he entertained of meeting his brother in a future life made him look forward to his release with joy. How constantly he endeavoured to comfort and reconcile me and his father, whose grief was more intense ! For my part I was supported, as long as he lived, with almost supernatural firmness. But when it was all over—when the emaciated form of my boy was taken from these arms, which had so long been his support, then I felt all the blankness of despair. Long and dreary were the days of my grief. I mourned as one who was not to be comforted. Thanks be to the God of comfort, I was roused from this state of sinful despair by my good and sincere friend Mr. Coventry. He brought to me a letter which had been confided to his care by my own sainted boy, and did not fear to make me read it. He knew me well, and hoped my days of darkness would soon pass ; and that, through the grace of God, I should soon look for comfort, from whom only it is to be derived. Here is the precious letter,' continued Lady Greville, as she took it from a small velvet case : ' it never leaves me, and its perusal always affords me a calm and holy pleasure.' She then read as follows—

' Dearest Mother,—Do not grieve too much for

me when I am gone. Remember where I hope to be—in the presence of that Redeemer you have taught me to adore. And you know how much I loved Henry, poor dear Henry! I think of him now as a bright angel in the courts of God: may I not trust to be with him also? and soon we may together join in praises to our God and king. Be comforted, dear mother; think of your little boys, but not with sorrow, for remember that all our griefs are ended, and we rest in peace, where we shall no longer be assailed by sickness or sorrow: and where, through the mediation of our Saviour, we shall await with joy our re-union with you, dearest papa, and our sweet sisters. Darling mother, farewell. When you will receive this, your Percy will be free from pain.'

Hyacinthe's sobs were no longer to be controlled. She threw her arms round her aunt, and wept upon her bosom; and for some moments they mingled their tears together: however, they were not bitter tears. Lady Greville had long subdued every feeling like that of murmuring against the Divine Will; and, although her tenderly maternal heart mourned silently over every memento of her boys, it was

a grief which we may hope even the Almighty would not condemn.

‘My dearest Hyacinthe,’ she said as soon as she had regained her calmness—‘I brought you here, not to afflict you, but in order to convey to you a useful lesson. Do not think that there exists, in this life, undisturbed happiness; it is not intended that it should be the case. In every cup there is a drop of bitterness; but the hand which dispenses afflictions, at the same time offers relief; and those trials appointed by God, are never without intended benefit to us. If human nature at first shrinks from sorrow, faith and Christian hope soon come to its support. Indeed we ought to rejoice that it pleases the Almighty to visit us with trials and sufferings in this world, instead of permitting us to enter upon eternity with hearts too devoted to the fascinations and delusions of the life we are called upon to renounce. What are a few years of worldly sorrow, if we have the supporting hand of God with us, who sees fit thus to prepare us for his heavenly kingdom? But now let us leave this dear and sacred spot,’ said Lady Greville, rising; ‘and recollect, my dear niece, that although our Creator has showered blessings without number upon me and mine, he has in his mercy, and for my eternal

welfare, made me acquainted with grief. Oh !
may it have its due effect upon me, and fit me to
hope with confidence to meet my angels again,
where we shall be for ever united !'

CHAPTER XVIII.

' O Charity ! our helpless nature's pride,
Thou friend to him who knows no friend beside,
Thine are the ample views that, unconfined,
Stretch to the utmost walks of human kind ;
Thine is the spirit, that with widest plan
Brother to brother binds, and man to man !'

How delightful was a Sabbath passed at Beechwood ! So calm, so serene, so happy-minded did all its inhabitants appear, that well might it give one the idea of its being the Almighty's ' favourite day.'

Lady Greville ever made it a rule, that on Saturday every necessary duty should be performed ; indeed it was universally considered by each member of the family as a day of preparation. All urgent letters were written. If any matters were in agitation, Lady Greville endeavoured that they should be definitively arranged during the week ; particularly desiring that her children should disencumber their memories of

trifles, such as orders, promises or engagements, that they might not intrude themselves on the morrow. On Saturday evening every arrangement was completed. The house looked as if every thing was put in order for an entertainment. Fresh flowers were in the vases, fresh perfumes in the crystal essence-bottles which decorated the tables, while superb engravings from scriptural paintings, in ample portfolios, were placed on ornamental stands.

Hyacinthe inquired if company was expected. 'Yes,' replied her aunt, 'we shall have company, but not of the kind you imagine we are to see. We do nothing on Saturday evening but prepare for Sunday. We collect our poor neighbours to instruct them in religion, and prepare their hearts for the Sabbath occupations, and, as far as we can, remove any little anxieties they may have on their minds, or reconcile any differences which may have arisen between them. We then give them tea in a large room which we keep on purpose for this little parish business.'

On Sunday morning, after breakfast, every one was occupied in the perusal of some lesson of piety until the church bell rang. Then all were expected to assemble, and proceed together to

attend divine worship in the temple dedicated to God, among their pious friends and neighbours.

On their return home Lady Greville said to Hyacinthe, 'It is our rule now to separate, and pass our time alone ; but we shall meet again at the hour of afternoon church. My girls go to their rooms, or into the gardens. Our doors are closed to visitors ; and charged as I am with the care of so large a family, the right to be alone with my God, and do nothing but communicate with Him, is a privilege that I cannot forego for any consideration. Do you not agree with me in thinking, my dear Hyacinthe, that it is an inexpressible comfort to be able one day in the week to give up ourselves entirely to thoughts and to pursuits, the fruits of which are love and holiness and joy ; to have no other occupation, than to 'acquaint ourselves with God, and be at peace ?' It always gives me an idea of the happiness we are to enjoy hereafter ; for if there is such peace in an earthly Sabbath, interrupted as it is with our coldness and carelessness and worldliness, what will be the bliss of that eternal Sabbath for which we are preparing ? A little while, and what is now but a brief foretaste, a passing semblance of celestial joy, will be an eternal and un-

changing reality ; a little while, and the smile of our Father will no more be averted : the world, renounced, will no more resume its power, and self-submitted will no more rebel. Now adieu, my dear niece, until three o'clock. I feel assured that the pupil of the excellent Mr. Neville must enjoy the method in which we spend our Sabbath.'

After the afternoon service, the party assembled at dinner, cheerful and happy, talking or silent as they pleased ; but no one seemed inclined to speak of yesterday's business or tomorrow's plans.

In the evening sacred music was the proposed amusement ; and books were on the tables if any one liked to read ; but they were books of a strictly religious tendency. Prayers ended this day of holy peace ; and Hyacinthe retired for the night with her heart overflowing with admiration of the practical piety of her exemplary relatives, and with a holy love towards her God.

The happiness which Hyacinthe was now enjoying was soon to come to an end ; and at length the dreaded day arrived when she was to leave Beechwood ; and it was announced to her, that Lord Avondale had sent a carriage and a confidential servant to escort her home.

Poor Hyacinthe clung in sorrow to her aunt ; who, much attached to her young and affectionate niece, felt real regret in losing her ; particularly knowing how far from happy, or congenial to her taste or disposition, was the home to which she was about to return. She said every thing in her power to soothe her, and to strengthen her mind to bear her trials with fortitude ; but it was with a saddened heart that she saw her depart.

Hyacinthe arrived at Avondale Castle with very different feelings to those with which she had entered Beechwood. The magnificence of the place instead of imparting delight, gave her that impression of awe and dread which was connected with every thing belonging to the abode of Lady Avondale ; and with sinking spirits she entered her splendid home, where she was soon met and most kindly greeted by her father.

Lord Avondale told her that the Countess was far from well, having caught a violent cold at the opera the night before she left London, which she had never been able to shake off ; and when Hyacinthe was conducted into the presence of her mother, she was much

shocked to observe a visible and distressing alteration in her appearance.

However, Lady Avondale was in no way softened or subdued by her illness. She raised herself upon the sofa for a few minutes evidently scanning with a most scrutinizing glance her daughter's appearance. She must have been struck by its most visible improvement; for a month's undisturbed tranquillity and happiness had done more towards the embellishment of Hyacinthe, than all the labour which had been bestowed upon her external charms by dancing-masters, calisthenic professors, milliners, hair-dressers, mantua-makers, and lady's-maids; while the advantage of associating intimately with those whose manners were distinguished by the purest refinement and most graceful simplicity was perceptible in her improved address.

Perhaps it was not possible to see any thing more blooming or beautiful than the countenance of this lovely girl; and Lady Avondale could not help expressing the admiration which beauty always extorted from her. How well you are looking, child!' she said, with animation; then added, in a changed, fretful, and impatient tone of voice—'But do you not think I am in

very bad looks? Am I not grown very thin, and very sallow?'

Hyacinthe was at a loss how to answer; and she felt shocked and unhappy. Her mother, with more irritation, repeated, 'Why don't you answer, Hyacinthe? I know by your silence that you think I am looking hideous; but I suppose you are so puffed up with the idea of your own beauty, that you care not to see me faded and ill.'

Hyacinthe was distressed beyond measure. With tears she at length found courage to say, that she certainly thought that Lady Avondale looked as if she had been suffering from recent illness; but that, doubtless, when the complaint was removed, her good looks would return, as her beauty was not gone, only a little less brilliant.

'Heaven knows,' said Lady Avondale, 'that if I am to look old and ugly, I cannot see much pleasure in living!'

Hyacinthe inwardly shuddered. Was it for the pleasure of admiration that she alone existed; and with such ideas was she in a state to die? How she longed to exhort her mother to remember that she had an immortal soul to save—to implore her to call her ways to re-

membrance—to humble herself before the throne of God, and, keeling at the cross of Christ, to exclaim with deep humility, ‘There is indeed no health in me!’

Lady Avondale was evidently in a precarious state. A neglected cold had settled upon her lungs, and symptoms of consumption were but too perceptible. However, no one dared to utter the apprehensions which all felt were painfully well grounded; none dared to impart to the mind of the patient a sense of her own danger.

It was, indeed, melancholy to Hyacinthe to behold her mother, whom she had left so bright and beautiful, suddenly changed into a suffering and fast-sinking invalid. What love she could now have felt for her, if its evidence had been allowed! How she sould have nursed her—have waited upon her, and prayed with her, as well as for her! But Lady Avondale was not yet softened by illness. Surrounded by people who fostered every feeling of vanity and worldly enjoyment, and who chased the very name of religion from the sick room for fear of its inducing gloom or melancholy, little did Lady Avondale think upon the subject; or she would have learnt that it brought ‘healing on its wings:’

and blessed by its soothing influence, she would have been reassured by the conviction, that even sighs of penitence breathed in secret, tears unseen by human eyes, are precious in His sight who 'willeth not the death of a sinner;' but hails such symptoms as the harbinger of that repentance which 'leadeth unto salvation.'

How different was the whole system of Avondale Castle, to the arrangements of Beechwood! Although Lady Avondale was so great an invalid, from the intermittent nature of her malady, she was at times able to see company; the house was therefore full of visitors, as she could not endure the *ennui* of being in a country-house with only a family party.

Hyacinthe was again consigned to the charge of her governesses; and how woful was the change from the intellectual companions she had quitted!

Lady Avondale had chosen her governesses as most ladies do; she had selected those who asked the highest salary, and had lived with people of the highest rank; but she had never inquired whether they were fitting companions for a girl of fifteen. Hyacinthe could not love her instructresses, for they were selfish and indifferent, and had too little dignity to inspire respect.

Still loving the country with all the enthusiasm of the rustic May, Hyacinthe hoped to enjoy the pleasures of Nature in her loveliest garb, in a home which offered every species of beauty, from the smiling flower-garden and tranquil lake, to the dark wood of towering pines and foaming torrent. But her expectations were in vain. If she asked to walk in the grounds, she was still to be accompanied by one of the governesses; and they were usually followed by a smart gentleman, who styled himself the head-gardener, armed with a slight *spud* in the shape of a walking-stick, and who, if she attempted to gather a flower, was ready in a moment to assist her with his scissors to save her the trouble of stooping. How he would have been startled and surprised could he have known that the high-born Lady Hyacinthe longed to assist in labours to which he even could not condescend; and that the brilliant parterres failed to interest her as much as her own more humble ones had formerly done when she had superintended and laboured in their cultivation! Indeed, this ceremonious inspection of Flora's beauties was any thing but satisfactory to poor Hyacinthe, who then would long to bound off to the wilder

beauties of the park, but was always checked by her French governess, who, in her tight silk slippers, felt unequal to any rougher path than that offered by the velvet lawn. This was all very vexatious, but she tried to submit with resignation to the deprivation.

But what the most distressed our gentle heroine, was the scorn, and almost anger, which her mother evinced when she begged to be allowed to visit the cottages by which they occasionally drove, and make acquaintance with the poor of the neighbouring village. 'Would it be consistent,' asked Lady Avondale, contemptuously, 'with the refinement and dignity of the Lady Hyacinthe Tremaine to be seen in the dirty abodes of the peasantry; to say nothing of the fevers and complaints that she might imbibe by visiting their miserable habitations?'

Strict orders were henceforth given to the governesses not to allow her for a moment out of their sight; 'for with her extraordinary low propensities,' added her Ladyship, 'there is no saying in what filthy hovel she might be found.'

Lady Avondale could not at all enter into her daughter's ideas of what true charity consisted in; and she really exerted herself to

enter into the subject with Hyacinthe, saying, that she considered that they did every thing that was necessary in that way. 'Perhaps,' she said, 'you are not aware of the expenses at which we are every year for the paupers who surround the castle. We pay an annual stipend to a schoolmaster to teach their dirty brats; and we subscribe to endless clubs and institutions for their benefit. Besides which,' added her Ladyship, with a most satisfied air, 'I cannot tell you how many oxen and sheep, blankets, flannel, coals and candles, we order to be distributed every Christmas—what would you do more?—and yet I believe they are a very ungrateful, dissatisfied set!'

All this was very true; but it still did not satisfy Hyacinthe. She had seen charity exercised in its purest form, from her earliest infancy; and at Beechwood, from the addition of wealth and power, it was exhibited in a still more extended manner. Often, on beholding her excellent aunt enduring fatigue and anxiety to ascertain the sincerity and claims of some pitiable sufferer, she had felt tempted to exclaim,—

'How few like thee inquire the wretched out,
And court the offices of soft humanity!'

Like thee, reserve their raiment for the naked,
Reach out their bread to feed the helpless orphan,
Or mix the pitying tear with those who weep !

And on witnessing the blessed effects of such active benevolence, she was reminded of the days of her childhood, when she was sometimes allowed to accompany the good Rector and his sister into the dwellings of the unfortunate, or into some mournful cottage, where poverty and sorrow dwelt together. There she beheld true charity—that charity so beautifully described by the Apostle, ‘which suffereth long, and is kind, which never faileth ;’ and which indeed gives lustre and grace to every thing performed by those whom it inspires, likening man to his Creator.

Experience might have taught Lady Avondale, that mistaken charity, or the giving alms indiscriminately, is more injurious than beneficial ; for it promotes idleness, by teaching poverty to rely on other aid than personal industry. Alms alone, however liberal, however extended, neither are, nor can be, the whole of the duty or nature of Christian charity ; but that which Hyacinthe had witnessed at Brookside Farm and Beechwood, she felt was

that she ought to imitate ; for indeed with truth could her excellent models have said, ' When the ear heard me, then it blessed me ; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me ; because I delivered the poor that cried, the fatherless and those who had none to help them. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy !'

CHAPTER XIX.

‘ When life flow’d by, and, like an angel, Death
Came to release them to the world on high,
Praise trembled still on each expiring breath,
And holy triumph beamed from every eye.’

WE will now for a brief period of time leave all the splendours of Avondale Castle, and return to the humble limits of Brookside Farm ; but such of my young readers who feel an interest in the kind and amiable persons who inhabit that peaceful spot, will be grieved with the sorrowful details I have now to relate.

With Hyacinthe’s departure, the cheerfulness and joy which had before reigned in that happy home had also fled, and were succeeded by a gloom and sadness, which even imparted itself to the inhabitants of the Rectory. Mr. Neville and his sister hardly knew, until they had lost her, how fondly they loved the young fondling ; and each experienced a degree of dejection that required their best efforts to shake off. The garden

did not look so blooming, and the Sunday-school seemed much to miss the energetic young assistant ; in short, May was wanted every where.

But at the farm, matters assumed a much more grievous aspect. The disease under which the good Wilmot suffered, though of long standing, was now, with its fatal effects, for the first time, most fearfully perceptible ; and, from day to day, and week to week, was becoming rapidly worse. The best assistance afforded by the first medical advice was administered to him, and every comfort which friendship and affection could suggest : but the dread fiat had gone forth, and it was evident to every one that he soon must die. But how calm and heavenly was the composure of this excellent man ! His hope had always been in a better world ; and to that world he now looked forward with confidence tempered by humility. This life to him had been one of great happiness, although marked by privations and toil ; and he thanked God for all the blessings he had enjoyed, and also for the comforting reflection that in quitting it he should leave none dear to him in want. He grieved at the idea of parting with the affectionate companion of his days of joy and of ease ; but there again the Christian's hope supported him, and the expectation of a blessed re-

union chastened his natural sorrow with pious resignation. He submitted to the will of the great Author of his being, happy in the calm which arises from a holy assurance of approaching felicity, and which is the inseparable attendant of a life of faith.

If however there was one worldly feeling in his heart, and which made the idea of death at times painful to this good man, and created the wish that he still might linger in this vale of tears ; it was the remembrance of his darling child—his own precious May. The idea of never again beholding her in this life, of not again pressing her loved form to his paternal bosom, embittered many moments, and brought frequent tears of sadness to his venerable cheeks. When depressed by the spasms, with which his malady almost constantly afflicted him, it wrung the hearts of all around him to hear his pathetic words concerning his dear lost child.

‘ My darling May ! ’ he would exclaim, ‘ why is she not here to soothe my dying spirit ? These eyes would close in peace, could they once more rest upon my child. Once more to hold her to my heart is now my only desire ; and, alas ! this craving wish is the link that still binds my thoughts to earth—still draws me from my God ! ’

Mr. Neville, when he saw the anxious state of the poor sufferer, and considered the comfort which an interview with Lady Hyacinthe would be to him, could hesitate no longer. He had felt a great reluctance to address the proud relatives of his dear young friend ; but he now believed that it was an imperative duty to do so, and to venture every thing to bring comfort to the dying moments of so good a man. He accordingly wrote to Lord Avondale, giving a most touching account of the state of Farmer Wilmot, and beseeching him to allow his daughter to pass a week with him at the Rectory, in order that she might take a final farewell of one who had been to her for so many years the most tender of parents. Mr. Neville then reminded the Earl how really urgent was this request, in consideration of all he owed Mr. and Mrs. Wilmot, for having been the means, through the assistance of the Almighty, of saving his child from utter destruction.

The letter had the desired effect. Lord Avondale was naturally kind-hearted ; but, possessing an indolent mind, had allowed himself to be too much under the dominion of his Countess, with whose imperious character my readers are already acquainted.

Hyacinthe was sitting with Lord Avondale when the letters were delivered to him ; and seeing the well-known handwriting of Mr. Neville, watched with anxiety her father's countenance, whilst he perused its contents. She soon perceived that he was agitated by what he read ; and when he had finished the letter, she started up, and approaching quickly towards him, entreated that she might be allowed also to see it. Agonizing indeed were the poor girl's feelings on its perusal ; and casting herself on her knees before her father, she besought him by every endearing expression, and every argument that occurred to her distressed mind, to suffer her to lose no time in setting out for Brookside.

‘ But your mother, my dear child,’ said Lord Avondale, hesitatingly,—‘ how are we to overrule her objections?—in her weak state I dare not agitate her.’

This was indeed a most perplexing idea : however, the Earl promised to do his best to obtain her consent. I will not enter into the particulars of all that Lord Avondale and Hyacinthe had to encounter in their endeavours to gain her mother's permission to her departure ; thus prejudicing my readers still more against the unhappy woman, whose doom was as nearly sealed as that of the

excellent farmer. I will only add, that the urgent entreaties of Lord Avondale, joined to those of the poor distressed Hyacinthe, at last prevailed; and a reluctant consent was extorted from Lady Avondale, that she might spend one fortnight with her friends.

There are few minds so callous as to revisit the scenes of their childhood without experiencing some emotion, or receiving some salutary lesson. And whether these scenes be in the crowded city, amidst the coarse and ordinary scenes of vulgar life, or in the lovely valley, with its green hills and its gliding streams—the same searching feelings swell the heart, as the thoughts of the past rush over it, speaking to us with impressive truth of the careless days of our childhood—of the gay dreams of our youth—of the transient pleasures of our prime—of the faded joy of our old age. They speak to us of parents now sleeping in the dust—of playfellows in a far distant land—of companions altered or alienated. They speak to us, it may be, of time misspent, of talents misapplied, of warnings neglected, of blessings unappreciated, of peace departed. And oh! how dark and apathetic must that mind be, which can find itself once more in the home of childhood, without being inspired by

such, or similarly wholesome reflections ! Retrospect of every kind must be for our good, for by retrospect we are alone corrected and instructed; and there is something of solemn reproof, when returning to a parent's house, (whether a father's arms are open to receive his long-absent child, or whether the eye that would have welcomed, or the tongue which would have blessed, are now mouldering in the grave), which bids the erring mortal turn from his evil ways. Oh ! many are the wild, tumultuous waves, that roll over the human mind, and obliterate many of its fairest characters—its fondest recollections; but still the indelible impressions of a parent's love remain stamped upon the heart. One little spot will still be found, consecrated to the purest, the holiest of earthly affections.

The feelings of Hyacinthe were most overpowering when she entered the pretty village of Fairbrook. It was to a father's arms she was returning—to the dear haunts of her happy childhood; and but for the sad, sad duty which brought her hither, how happy she would have felt ! She had viewed fairer scenes than those her tearful eye now rested upon, and had gazed with enthusiasm on the inanimate objects of nature; but however they had charmed her

senses, or filled her imagination, they wanted that deep and powerful interest which seemed to entwine with her very existence—the love of her early home.

The carriage that conveyed her stopped at the gate of the Rectory. She rushed from it, and was soon in the arms of her dear Mrs. Villars, which she only quitted to be clasped tenderly to the bosom of Mr. Neville. With what admiration they gazed upon the beautiful, high-born girl that stood before them; and who, with the most humble affection, besought them to bless her and love her, as they used to do in those happy days when she knew no other friends than those who called her their own little May.

For a few minutes indeed, in the buoyancy of youthful excitement, Hyacinthe almost forgot her very grief; and with childish eagerness she passed quickly through every well-known room in the Rectory. She then made a rapid circuit of the dearly loved garden, and renewed her acquaintance with the old respectable domestics, who at first shrunk back, not knowing how they might be received by the fine lady Hyacinthe Tremaine; but who, they soon found, had not lost one portion of the kindness and urbanity possessed by the humble May.

The excitement of the first few moments over, the recollection of *why* she was there, rushed to the mind of Hyacinthe with full force ; and bitter tears started into her eyes, as she asked in a low trembling voice, ‘ How is he ?—when may I see him ?’

Mr. Neville and his sister looked very sad. ‘ My dear child,’ he then said, ‘ you must prepare yourself for much agitation ; our poor friend is very altered, and so weakened by his disease, that I fear he is near his last hour. Nay, my love,’ added he, seeing Hyacinthe give way to a paroxysm of grief, ‘ you have come here to yield comfort, not to add to affliction by giving way to your own sorrow. I know it is a justifiable sorrow ; for one of the deepest wounds which our hearts can receive in this world, is caused by the death of those who are dear to us ; and it admits of no other consolation than that which is found in absolute submission to the will of God—that gracious Being who never afflicts us but for our good, and who will repay with heavenly bliss our resignation to earthly sorrows. We may lament the approaching fate of our good friend, but the change to him is exceeding gain : the mercy of God takes him from the evil to come, and he is well prepared to meet his Almighty Father.’

‘And my dear mother!—for so I will ever call her—how does she support her affliction?’ sobbed poor Hyacinthe.

‘She endures her trial in silence,’ replied Mr. Neville, ‘with a humble mind, yet with invincible courage—patient in hope, strong only in God, and, deriving support and consolation from him alone : she recalls to her mind the image of her dying Saviour, remembers his meek acceptance of that bitter cup, because it was sent to him by his Heavenly Father ; and says with him, ‘My God, not my will, but thine be done!’

We can imagine the feelings of the tender-hearted Hyacinthe, when she accompanied Mr. Neville to the farm : her tears were all dried up, but her pale countenance and trembling steps plainly indicated her inward sufferings.

She arrived at length at the beautiful and picturesque farm, and entered the garden, once the pride of its possessors ; but in the rapid glance which Hyacinthe cast over it, she read an accurate history of grief in the careless state of this once cherished spot. One part of it alone appeared never to have lost its interest with the inhabitants of the farm : it was an arbour formed from a large hawthorn-tree, and was surrounded by a tiny flower-garden. This spot

they used to call 'May's Bower;' and it had been fostered with the tenderest care, whilst every thing else had been neglected. A tear rose to her eye as she passed it; but she checked every contending emotion, and endeavoured to nerve herself for the approaching interview.

And indeed it required all her fortitude to suppress her sobs, when she felt herself in the arms of her kindest and fondest of friends. And when she read in her pale and worn countenance the inroads which grief had made in her heart, she again sunk upon Mrs. Wilmot's bosom, exclaiming—'My mother! your May has returned to you unchanged, and with all the fond affection of your own child;—she is come to mingle her tears with yours—to share your anxieties, and to endeavour to soothe you with her tenderest love. Oh! this dear, once happy home—would that I had never left it! But my father!—when may I see him!'

'My dear child,' replied Mrs. Wilmot, much affected, 'he is now sleeping, and we must not disturb him, for he has little rest from pain; but you shall go with me and look at him. His sleep, from the opium which has been administered, is profound; and I would rather you should get

over the first sight of his altered appearance before he sees you. But promise me to be calm ; you always obeyed your mother, darling, and I know I may rely upon you.'

She then opened a door which led into a room on the same floor, to which Farmer Wilmot had been removed ; for before his illness became so fatally severe, he had been able occasionally to walk in the garden, and sit for a while in the hawthorn bower, which the spring had covered with the sweetest May blossoms.

Hyacinthe, with an effort over her feelings, followed Mrs. Wilmot into the room, and there she beheld the excellent being whom she still considered in the light of a father. He was lying in a deep sleep, supported by pillows. Could Hyacinthe in this pale, spectral form, recognise the athletic person of the well-looking farmer ? Disease had indeed done its worst ; and yet the same kind benevolent expression was still there ; no impatient frown clouded his brow, and a serene smile seemed to play upon his half-closed lips. A portrait of herself, which Hyacinthe had sent to him, was hung exactly opposite the bed, and in such a position that he could always see it ; while close to it hung a little straw bonnet and a grey cloak, which she immediately recognized as

her former possessions. The room was ornamented with presents which she at different times had despatched to the farm ; every thing evincing how much his thoughts were fixed upon herself ; while in his thin hand, which was lying on the coverlid, she perceived the last letter she had written to him.

Affected beyond measure, poor Hyacinthe sunk upon a chair by the bedside, and wept in silence. Mrs. Wilmot drew the curtain so as to shut out the sight of the afflicted Hyacinthe, should her husband suddenly awake ; and then seated herself by her darling child, who, throwing an arm round her neck, wept gently upon her bosom.

In about a quarter of an hour Farmer Wilmot moved. His wife was immediately by his side. ‘ Jane,’ he exclaimed in a voice hollow and weak, ‘ I have had such a delightful dream. I fancied that our child was here, and that I was holding her by the hand. But I suppose,’ he added with a deep sigh of disappointment, ‘ it was this dear letter which suggested the idea. However, she will soon be here—will she not ?’

‘ Very, very soon, my dear husband,’ Mrs. Wilmot replied, endeavouring to speak calmly. ‘ But you must promise me, that when you see her you will be perfectly still. You know how

every exertion brings on a return of your complaint; therefore, when I tell you she is come, you must be as tranquil and as composed as possible, under such an agitating meeting.'

'I promise every thing, dear Jane; but when do you think I shall see her? Recollect my life is ebbing fast; and I so pray for a few days' enjoyment of her society.'

'May is already at the Rectory,' said Mrs. Wilmot, wishing to prepare her husband by degrees. Then watching his countenance with anxiety to see how it affected him, she added with caution, 'indeed she is now on her way to the farm, nor should I wonder should she arrive immediately: dear James,' she at length said, taking his hand with tenderness, 'if I tell you that you shall see her this moment, will you promise your poor wife not to agitate yourself—will you be calm?'

The farmer bowed his head in acquiescence; and his own May, who could no longer control her feelings, drawing back the curtain, sunk upon her knees before the bed, and exclaimed, 'Here, father, is your child.'

We will pass over the first half hour of this happy meeting; for it is not for the pen to de-

scribe its sacred nature. But it will be pleasing to my readers to look again at our high-born heroine, once more assuming the character of the humble May ; for in a very short space of time she had taken her place in the sick-room, and, as if she had never quitted him, was again her father's nurse—his tender and watchful servant. She seemed to fall back immediately into all her old habits of affection and usefulness ; and the good man might well forget that he had ever been deprived of her society. Even Mrs. Wilmot became a secondary assistant in the dying man's chamber. No one smoothed his pillows so well as May ; no food tasted so well as that which he saw her fingers prepare ; no one read so sweetly to him ; no one slept so lightly by his side, as his sweet May, who had insisted upon taking Mrs. Wilmot's post upon a sofa at night, as the poor grieving wife was very nearly worn out by watching and care.

For a few days after Hyacinthe's arrival Farmer Wilmot appeared better ; so much did happiness and gratified affection excite and revive him : but the flame which for a moment flashed with renewed life, sunk again ; and the medical man pronounced that his death was fast approaching.

This was no distressing hearing to this true Christian. The happiness he had enjoyed in again beholding his beloved foundling, the comfort which her presence afforded him, and the assurance that in her his poor widow would always find an affectionate and zealous friend, only inspired him with more lively gratitude towards the Author of this good.

With her hand clasped in his, and supported by his excellent wife, he felt he could die in peace. 'Dearest child,' he would say, 'think of me when I am gone, and may my last moments be a source of comfort to you ! for they will, I trust, show you the happiness with which he who trusteth in the atonement of a Saviour, and who claims the pardon gained for him by his all-sufficient sacrifice upon the cross, leaves a world which can only be a preparation for that which is to come. Oh ! may it teach you, my beloved child, to cherish that faith—those holy affections and habits, which will enable you to rejoice in the bright prospect of a happy death ! and surely it ought to confirm and strengthen your faith to behold a weak mortal just about to die, full of joy and peace ; enabled by that same holy trust to contemplate with delight the approaching moment, when he may hope to be associated with

kindred spirits in everlasting joy and love. May you my sweet child, ever taste with a grateful heart the blessings which the unwearied hand of Providence has scattered in your path ! But do not lose sight of the far greater delights—the transcendent glories of your eternal throne. Remember that you are a candidate for an inheritance among the saints in bliss—for the society of angels, and of God. May you, my child—may you, my beloved wife, be numbered among those active servants whom the Lord at his coming shall find ready !’

Thus, with his latest breath, did this excellent man discourse with those around him.

Ten days after Hyacinthe’s arrival he died calmly and without pain. His last words were addressed to his God—his last look was riveted upon the child of his adoption. So heavenly tranquil was his departure, that how could his weeping survivors wish that he was still lingering in this world of trouble ?

Such an end throws a soft and holy light over the dark valley of the shadow of death. It bids the mourner and the sufferer ‘to be of good cheer,’ and thus patiently and cheerfully to await the coming of the Lord. It softens the pangs of separation from those who are dear to us ; teach

ing us that by a holy and righteous life, a perfect submission to the will of God—a faith in his promises, death will be robbed of its sting, and the grave of its victory.

CHAPTER XX.

'Look above thee—there, indeed,
May thy thoughts repose delighted;
If thy wounded bosom bleed,
If thy fondest hopes are blighted,
There a stream of comfort flows.'

HYACINTHE remained at Brookside Farm until after she had witnessed the last sad offices performed for the mortal remains of her much-loved friend. We will pass over the details of that melancholy day, when all that was left of one so dearly prized was for ever removed from the home which had so long been his delight, to be consigned to the dreary earth. We can all feel for the grief of those who had loved the mild beauties of the character of the departed Christian.

Hyacinthe was most affectionately anxious to arrange some plan for the future comfort of the dear widow. She found that she still wished to linger in the abode where she had spent the happiest, as well as the saddest days of her life; therefore the farm and the offices connected with

agricultural pursuits were let off to a friendly neighbour, and Mrs. Wilmot was left in possession of the house and garden.

Hyacinthe had received *carte blanche* from her father, that she might spare no expense to satisfy any of the wishes of her foster-mother ; but they were few in number, and it was a great comfort to the considerate girl to find that she was able to make arrangements for the continued residence of Susan Ashfield at the farm, whose kindness and activity had much endeared her to Mrs. Wilmot.

Bitter was the idea of the approaching parting to Hyacinthe and her adopted mother. It was almost heart-breaking to our poor heroine, who felt that she would now be leaving Mrs. Wilmot without that stay, that comfort which had hitherto softened every pain. Henceforth she was to be alone in a place where every object, every circumstance must remind her of that dear husband whom she loved next to her God ; and whom she would never again behold in a mortal state. But when the Almighty in His infinite wisdom imposes a sacrifice upon us, and takes from us some beloved object, he does not leave us to endure the stroke unsustained ; and if through the veil of probationary sorrow which he spreads over us, we look up to Him for aid, we shall receive it, and

feel assured that by means of such mortal trials we are to reap everlasting joy.

Jane Wilmot now shone forth as a true disciple of our Lord. 'My child,' she said to Hyacinthe, who was weeping bitterly by her side, 'weep not for me, for God will not reject the prayer of the poor and desolate, nor despise the broken and contrite heart. What comfort does he not vouchsafe us, if in the hour of affliction we rest on him? Let us not then, my beloved girl, by the repining of wounded hearts, forego this blessed assurance of consolation. His holy word teaches and enables us to endure whatever may be our lot in this passing scene; bidding us remember that it is *here* where we must make good our claims to happiness *hereafter*. And, after all, how selfishly we mourn for the remaining days of a being whom indeed we fondly loved, but who must now be far happier with his God, from whose sight sorrow and sighing flee away—in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore! Such is the healing power of faith and true love towards God, it sanctifies even the severest trials, and gives the mourner power to say, 'Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall

be revealed in us,' if we pass through them in pious submission to the Divine will.'

Thus did this excellent woman combat with her own grief, to impart consolation to her dear child. Oh! blessed are they who even in the anguish of their spirit can bring their fainting hearts before the footstool of their God! With such, 'weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.'

Before Hyacinthe quitted her early home, she felt that it would be a melancholy gratification to pay a parting visit to one spot, from peculiar circumstances most dear to her: it was her own May Bower, her former precious territory, and which had been so tenderly treasured by her dear departed friend. There had they together planted at its entrance a honey-suckle and a wild rose; and daily were they tended, and fondly were they watched by him, as long as his feeble limbs had permitted him to reach the spot. During her absence they had grown and flourished; but the sweetness of both were passed for a season, and their long and slender branches now hung in mournful desolation.

With sad and faltering steps, the last morning of Hyacinthe's stay at Brookside she approached the spot which brought such painful, though

tender recollections to her mind—each bush, each stone, told its noiseless tale of neglect and perished life ; while the very silence that surrounded her, spoke more eloquently than words could have done of the loss her heart had sustained. She entered the mossy bower, so long her favourite retreat, and gave way to the feelings which oppressed her. Here it was almost a luxury to weep ; it seemed as if these mute witnesses of her early pleasures were now become the sympathetic depositaries of her sacred and maturer sorrow. Here she could almost fancy, in the excitement wrought by memory on her imagination, that the spirit of the tender friend for whom she grieved hovered near her. ‘Dearest father,’ she cried, as if addressing him, ‘hear your child ! Your pure spirit will rejoice, when she promises never to forget you, or the precepts it was your constant care to inculcate in her mind. Ever remembering them, I will endeavour to tread with watchfulness the path of duty which lies before me ; still imagining that I am cheered by your kind smile of approbation ; and, in adversity or prosperity, I trust I may prove myself worthy of the love and care which charity first, and then affection, bestowed on the destitute May.’

Hyacinthe was roused from a melancholy re-

verie, which followed this apostrophe to the being who had so fondly sheltered and protected her childhood, by the arrival of Mr. Neville, who came to inform her that every thing was in readiness for her departure. She therefore prepared to bid a long, a last adieu to the home of her youth ; but I should vainly attempt to depict the feelings which that gave rise to :—

‘Ye who have known what ’tis to dote upon
A few dear objects, will in sadness feel
Such partings break the heart.’

It was a very different scene to which Hyacinthe was returning, although she was again to undergo the trials offered by the chamber of death.

Since her departure Lady Avondale had become considerably worse, and was now entirely confined to her room.

Lord Avondale met Hyacinthe on her arrival with a countenance grave and dejected. He took her hand with a mournful tenderness, as he said, ‘Your mother, my dear girl, has been dreadfully ill since you were here, and her spirits are now in a very irritable and depressed state. She declares that she will not see you ; adding, she is sure you will be so dismal, and that you will tell such melancholy histories of the scenes you have lately

witnessed. Therefore you must not attempt to see her, until of her own accord she sends for you. She is indeed very, very ill, and in a wretched state of mind.'

Lord Avondale was much agitated, and his daughter partook too much of his feelings to be able to speak.

'Hyacinthe,' he again said, after a dismal pause, 'how I wish that your poor mother had ever experienced the blessings of religious instruction! she might then have had some comfort in her present state; but now I fear she has no hope in this world, or in the next.

'Oh! say not so,' exclaimed Hyacinthe in an agony of terror; whilst there is life there is hope, both for her soul and body. Our gracious Lord freely offers his 'preserving grace' to enable a willing soul to come to him. He does not content himself with calling home his wandering sheep, but seeks those that are lost, and when he has found them rejoiceth. If my poor mamma would only fix her thoughts steadfastly upon her Redeemer, He has both the power and will to restore her soul, and to reconcile her to her Heavenly Father. Her wanderings cannot have been too wide to hinder the effect of his divine influence;—an influence which will

not only *speak* to her heart, but *change* her heart, and bring her at once to her God. Let us send for the good Mr. Neville,' she continued, with a quickness of utterance and gentle earnestness which spoke her interest in her words ; ' he has always been successful in his endeavours to soften the pangs of the sick or the dying. By the kindest manner, and the most soothing expressions, he will draw her mind by degrees from this world, and induce her to rely on our Saviour's mediation to secure her salvation. Is there anything too weak for him to strengthen—too yielding for him to render firm ? Oh ! no : believe me, my dearest father, that his voice can call, and cheer, and encourage her, and make her more than conqueror over the most fearful adversary of her soul.'

'Hyacinthe,' replied Lord Avondale, ' we will endeavour to do the best to calm your afflicted mother ; but I scarcely know how we shall ever be able to introduce the subject of religion. She would immediately think that we considered her in danger, and then the agonies of her mind would be beyond measure great. She has had a life of what she considers happiness. The world is her idol, and the idea of quitting it, for one with which she has so little acquaintance, would be anguish and bitterness beyond endurance.'

‘I do not despair, papa,’ Hyacinthe replied thoughtfully; ‘with great care and caution much may be done; and I have been brought up to consider it as a most severe and bounden duty, that we all use our endeavours, however feeble they may be, to assist each other on our way to heaven.’

Whilst thus Hyacinthe was in the act of speaking to her father, one of Lady Avondale’s female attendants hastily entered the room, to say that her Ladyship had been suddenly seized with a fainting fit, and begged Lord Avondale to come to her immediately.

Hyacinthe followed her father up the noble staircase, adorned with vases and statues, with graceful lamps at every landing. And, oh ! the sumptuous, the splendid air of every thing within the chamber of sickness ! contrasting so strangely with the rustic simplicity of that in which she had so lately administered the services of love and watchfulness. But the dispensations of Providence are fearful levellers of the factitious distinctions among men ! ‘Little boots it to the course of Death, whether he plucks his prey from the downy couch curtained with satin, or the wretched pallet of a prison or workhouse. And what are all the dazzling splendours of rank and

riches?—what have they of solace or mitigation to him bidden ‘to turn his pale face to the wall’—to look his last on life ‘its toys and tinsel?’ Resignation to the will of God yields a softer pillow to the dying one, than the utmost refinements of art; Christian faith beams more sweetly on the closing lid, than the attempered light shed by perfumed oil from an agate lamp.’

Lady Avondale after a short time recovered from the succession of fainting fits which had so alarmed her attendants; but she appeared suffering and much exhausted. Lord Avondale thought this would be a favourable opportunity of introducing Hyacinthe into the presence of her mother, and therefore motioned her to approach from the adjoining dressing-room, at the door of which she had stationed herself; her heart beating with anxiety to be of assistance, but withheld by the timidity of her gentle nature. She advanced, and, kneeling by the side of this still lovely woman, pressed to her lips one of her hands which hung listlessly over the sofa. How Hyacinthe’s affectionate bosom thrilled with joy, when she beheld her mother’s eye turned to her with a kind expression! Oh! how she longed to impart to her all she felt! but she recollected that her only chance of gaining any influence

over her, would be in the most cautious conduct and by the slowest degrees.

When Lady Avondale was more recovered, Hyacinthe said to her in a cheerful voice, 'Mamma, you must not tell me to leave you; for do not imagine that I shall be a dismal companion. I trust if you will try me, that you will find that I shall amuse, rather than depress you.'

'Well, pretty Hyacinthe, I will try you,' replied Lady Avondale; adding, with a faint smile, 'to tell you the truth, I am rather tired of all my present attendants. They were very attentive when I was first taken ill; but now that my illness has lasted so long, I evidently see that they are tired of the confinement it imposes on them. They are all an ungrateful set. Victorine is angry, because I do not give her almost every day some dress that I have scarcely worn; and all the others have some equally selfish cause of dissatisfaction.'

'Oh! then, my dearest mamma, you must allow me to become your nurse,' Hyacinthe exclaimed, rejoicing at the ground she had gained: 'you know that I have not been brought up as a fine lady; and if you will but try me, you will find how useful I can make myself; and

I hope you know that only one feeling will actuate me—that of pleasing, and being of service to you.’

‘Very well; I think I must adopt you as a nurse, my pretty Hyacinthe; but recollect, I am to have no dismalities—no religion forced upon me. I am sure,’ the Countess added, beginning to weep, ‘that I am miserable enough already, and want nothing to make me still more wretched and melancholy.’

Hyacinthe was so glad to have gained an access to her mother’s room on any terms, that she abstained from any premature anxiety to draw her mind to subjects which were really calculated to soothe it.

In a few days a circumstance occurred, which quite established Hyacinthe about the person of Lady Avondale. Mademoiselle Victorine having heard of an eligible situation, and knowing that there was little probability of her present lady ever entering again into that course of life, which alone offered a harvest and occupation pleasing to her peculiar talents, abruptly left her place; and Hyacinthe soon evinced such intelligence and promptness, added to the most winning softness and ability in attending to her mother, that soon she could not bear her to leave her sight.

With a degree of skill and tact, scarcely in accordance with the youth of our heroine, she at length introduced the dreaded subject of religion. But, oh ! how distressing was the state in which she found her poor parent's mind ! No ray of light or hope appeared to illuminate it— all was darkness and confusion. She had lived only for this world ; and now that it was receding from her grasp, she knew not what to cling to—where to look for consolation.

How different was this bed of sickness and of death to the one Hyacinthe had so lately watched ! There the poor sufferer's every pang was soothed by the divine hand by which he was supported. The greater his pain and weakness the nearer he felt to his Redeemer. Here, racked with suffering, and with life drawing to its close, Lady Avondale's heart still fixed itself with frightful tenacity on the things of this world. Her impatience and fretfulness were dreadful to witness ; and when these evidences of temper subsided, they were succeeded by despondence and wretchedness equally distressing to those around. The decay of her beauty appeared to give her most disturbance ; and the pleasures of dress, its study, and adornments to her invalid frame, were still the paramount occupations of Lady Avon-

dale's mind. The knowledge of what was passing in the world was the next subject of interest ; and for the gratification of both these tastes, she could not have had a more able assistant than in the accomplished abigail who replaced Victorine. It was with no small degree of sorrow and unhappiness that Hyacinthe beheld from day to day the shrinking form baffle even the skill of the talented lady's maid, to give the newly invented wrapping-gown the intended fall ; while the increasing hollow of the cheek, and the deepening yellow of the complexion, mocked equally all attempts for the partial concealment of the ravages of sickness, by the exquisite lace-cap and the delicate tinted ribbon. Hyacinthe recoiled from the vain effort to make death look lovely, and with shrinking terror asked herself, whether it was thus an immortal spirit was to prepare to present itself at the judgment-seat of its God ? But after a short time, as the disease under which the Countess laboured increased in violence, it was the Almighty's gracious will to send his blessed assistance to subdue her worldly feelings.

In her hours of loneliness—in the dark monotony of a sick room, the obligation seemed almost peremptorily enforced on her ' to commune with her heart, and be still.' There; no festive sounds

disturbed her melancholy, but wholesome musings; no voices of gay companions broke upon her solitude; no insidious flatterer recalled the dream of vanity to her sinking heart. Conscience awoke from its deep slumber. She called her ways to remembrance; she cast a backward glance at the life of forgetfulness which she had led, and a sense of wrong mingled with the recollections which crowded upon her mind. Talents perverted, duties slighted, time unredeemed, furnish but too many sources of terror and humiliation to an awakened conscience. She began, though late, to feel that there was no refuge from evil, no guard from sin, but in the knowledge of the Almighty God: and then a glimmering light broke over her benighted soul, telling her there could be no pardon for past unrighteousness but through the merits and mediation of a blessed Redeemer. The holy radiance shed by the Spirit stayed not here its blessed influence; brighter and brighter grew its light; and soon with holy fervour and heart-felt eagerness, the spontaneous prayer burst from her trembling lips—‘God be merciful to me a sinner!’

At first this happy dawn was unperceived by Hyacinthe. She had been accustomed when observing the sufferings of Lady Avondale more

intense than usual, to kneel by her bedside, and pray in a low but earnest voice that her mother's agony might be softened, and her mind tranquilized. At first Lady Avondale appeared to take little notice of this action ; but by degrees Hyacinthe saw that she sometimes listened, and soon found that it evidently gave her satisfaction ; for her countenance became more tranquil, and once or twice she had whispered ' go on.'

One day, after Hyacinthe had been praying some time, in the words of a beautiful prayer, which had been written by Mr. Neville expressly for the chamber of death and sickness, Lady Avondale, who had listened with deep attention, at length said to her daughter in a voice of intense emotion,—

' Oh ! Hyacinthe, would that I could live some years longer to make my peace with God ! that God whom I have never tried to love ! Oh ! if you could know what it was to feel as I do *now*, you would pity me. I am aware that I must die ; and now, for the first time, have learnt to reflect on what is to follow death. What is to become of one, who feels that she is, what your prayer has just taught her, ' a stranger in the courts of the Lord ?' What a lesson am I to those who, like me, have only lived for the enjoy-

ments of this world ; who forget that there is an end to all things, and that there is an ever-enduring hereafter ? what is to become of me, dear Hyacinthe ? I feel I have no time left to reconcile me to the God whom I have so selfishly neglected. And for what ? Alas ! alas ! how paltry and grovelling appear the joys for which I have hitherto alone lived ! How loathsome the luxury for which I have bartered my salvation ! But despair and sickness change most fearfully the aspect of every thing ; and I fancy now that I would gladly submit to the severest penury to get rid of the upbraidings of my feelings. Oh ! my child, how different I must appear to you when compared to the good Farmer Wilmot, who led a life of duty and religious excellence ! to such a person, death and sickness must have been disarmed of all the horrors which now so appal me !'

Lady Avondale sunk exhausted on her pillow, overcome by the painful violence of her remorseful feelings ; while sobs and sighs shewed their continuance in her mind. But her words and dreadful agitation, however they pained the tender heart of her daughter, were not without comfort. She knew that it was that state of mind alone which would bring with it ultimate peace : and she inwardly thanked her God, that her poor mother was at length brought to the knowledge

of her great and absolute want of the atoning power and assistance of our Saviour and the Holy Spirit.

Hyacinthe's whole time and conversation from this day past were devoted to pious subjects. Much was she enabled to say that soothed and consoled her dying parent. She assured her how precious in the sight of God were those sighs of penitence breathed in secret—those tears unseen by human eyes;—that our tender Father views with attentive and compassionate regards the first faint effort to return to Him;—that he strengthens us by his grace; he encourages us by his promises; he guides us by his Spirit; and receives us into the number of his children: that—

‘ His ear is open to the faintest cry,
His grace descends to meet the lifted eye,
He reads the language of a silent tear,
And sighs are incense from a heart sincere.’

Thus soothed and encouraged by her virtuous daughter, Lady Avondale passed the remaining months of her life. She learnt to look forward with hope to that kingdom, the only subject worthy the struggles and exertions of an immortal spirit. She looked back with shame and con-

tempt to the frivolous pleasures and paltry gratifications by which the stream of her life had been so polluted and disturbed. Objects once contemplated with delight, were seen in their real proportions ; and they appeared less than nothing—the nothingness of vanity ! She felt the absurdity and evil of those high thoughts of her bosom which, engendering pride, had led to bitterness and every unworthy passion, and deeply did she now condemn them.

She at length learnt with deep humility to hope that pardon would be extended, notwithstanding the past unrighteousness of her days ; she learnt to believe that she had ‘an advocate with the Father—even Jesus Christ the righteous ;’ that ‘Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, *and forgiveness of sins !*’

With this deep conviction Lady Avondale’s last moments were gilded. She sank into her eternal rest, from the arms of her daughter and husband, who himself benefited by the rays of holiness shed on the pillow of death ; and we must hope that her humble and contrite heart, with all its affections increased and purified, was received as a peace-offering by a merciful God !

CHAPTER XXI.

' Hope gladdens the world with its living ray,
 And smiles serenely on all ;
 It scatters a thousand charms in its way
 Over this earthly ball ;
 It has streams of peace, and joy, and love,
 To water this valley of death ;
 And brings the flowers of heaven from above
 For virtue's undying wreath.'

HYACINTHE is now about to take her leave of her kind readers. We have seen her sustain more than one character, and I trust it has been in a manner likely to edify those of my young friends who may chance to peruse this simple tale. But we will not leave her in sorrow and affliction. The Almighty hand showered much felicity upon her during the remainder of her life : not that she escaped the pains and troubles which we must all expect to meet with in the course of our pilgrimage through a world, the paths of which are, for the wisest reasons, strewed

alike with thorns and roses. She had her share of human woe; but it was so chastened and supported by the aid to which she always looked, that every sorrow was softened. Rich is the reward even on earth, in peace of conscience, to those who only trust in God. He will hear the voice of our prayers—He will send his Holy Spirit to guard us from the pollutions, and guide us through the perplexities of the world; and he will ultimately welcome us to that eternal home, where the ransomed of the Lord shall meet to taste of everlasting joy.

After the sad scene which Lord Avondale and Hyacinthe had witnessed at the Castle, Lord Avondale was anxious that by change of place the sorrowful impression left on their minds should be in a measure obviated: they therefore made a short tour on the Continent. On their return, Hyacinthe was delighted by her father proposing a visit to Beechwood; and too happy was she to find herself once more in the arms of her dear aunt and amiable cousins.

Lord Avondale, soon after their arrival, told her that business would take him from her for a few weeks, and that he would then return to accompany her back to Avondale Castle.

It was with much regret that Hyacinthe parted

with her father ; her young affectionate heart clung with the truest filial love to one who had endeared himself to her by such constant tenderness and indulgence ; but he promised her soon to return, and added, that his leaving her was in order to ensure her future happiness. He said this with a look so full of cheerful satisfaction, that it communicated pleasure to the heart of his daughter. Her thoughts instantly glanced towards her dear friends at Fairbrook ; but Lord Avondale had been so invariably silent upon the subject, that, with the delicacy which was natural to her, she had scarcely ever ventured to express her feelings or wishes relative to the objects of her early affection, from the fear that it might be irksome to him.

At the expiration of six weeks Lord Avondale returned, improved in looks and spirits. He would not hear of extending their stay at Beechwood beyond the next day, and appeared all anxiety to be at home.

What joy—what happiness awaited our heroine, on her arrival at the Castle !

‘Hyacinthe,’ said Lord Avondale, when they had entered the hall, ‘I wish to shew you an alteration I have made in your apartments.’

She followed the Earl with eagerness, seeing by

his countenance that some joyful surprise awaited her: and indeed most joyful were her feelings, when, on entering her sitting-room, she was clasped to the bosom of her foster-mother.

‘We are never again to part, my darling child,’ exclaimed this excellent woman; while Hyacinthe, who wept from excess of emotion, could only falter out, as she for a moment turned from her embrace, to throw herself into the arms of Lord Avondale, ‘Oh! this is indeed happiness!—how can I ever thank you sufficiently, my dear kind father?’

After a few minutes given to the delight of this meeting, Mrs. Wilmot opened a door which communicated to apartments Lord Avondale had destined for her use; and there Hyacinthe found the good Susan Ashfield, who had a room appropriated to her, close to those of her mistress.

Mrs. Wilmot was to reside at the Castle as long as she lived; where indeed her days might pass as quietly as at her cottage. She was put into possession of a bed-room and a small dressing-closet; with a charming sitting-room, looking into a beautiful flower-garden, which she was also to consider as her own. A private staircase communicated with these rooms, which

led to a small vestibule, by which she could at once descend to her little territory, from whence a path led to the most secluded and beautiful parts of the park. Her dear child could be with her the greatest part of the day; for it is needless to relate that the two governesses appointed to attend on the Lady Hyacinthe had long since been dismissed, her future education being more judiciously designed. And how felicitous it was to the high-born heiress of Avondale Castle, to feel that she could now watch over the declining years of one who had succoured the destitute little May; and by unwearied kindness and attention endeavour to repay her for all that had been done for her during her more than usually helpless childhood! And poor Mrs. Wilmot—how did her pious heart expand with gratitude to God, who thus rewarded her by a protected and happy old age for the deeds of charity done in earlier years!

‘But, my dear Mrs. Villars, and dear good Mr. Neville, how you will miss them, my own darling mother!—and how distressed they must have been to have lost you!’ said Hyacinthe, with a shaded countenance, after the first joyous excitement had subsided.

‘Ask no questions, dearest, and wait with patience, and you will find that they are almost as happy as I am.’

With this delightful assurance of Mrs. Wilmot, Hyacinthe was obliged to be satisfied ; for she could elicit nothing further either from her or Lord Avondale.

Much did it delight this affectionate girl to witness the attentive kindness of the Earl’s manner to Mrs. Wilmot, who with tears of gratitude told the history of her being now domesticated at the Castle.

Lord Avondale had come in person to the farm, to solicit her to take up her abode under the same roof with her adopted daughter. ‘I felt much, my dear child,’ she added, ‘in leaving the spot where rested all that remained to me of my precious husband ; and at first I felt that it would be impossible for me to tear myself away from my dear home : but at length I considered how he would have wished me to have acted, and at once my mind was altered. I knew that to give you happiness would have been his most fervent wish ; and believe me, my child, it is mine also. Life once more will become interesting to me, for I can now again devote myself to you ; and in seeing your happiness I shall have fresh and daily

cause of adoring the Divine source from whence it flows.'

The next day was Sunday. Hyacinthe, now mistress of her own actions, and of her father's establishment, was anxious to introduce, by degrees, into Avondale Castle, the habits of Beechwood. How happy it would make her if she could induce those around her to consider this holy day as one of rest and recollection, and of communion with God: in which the Lord's name was to be honoured and praised, from the rising up of the sun to the going down thereof!

With very varied feelings did this amiable girl pursue her path towards the church, leaning on the arm of her father, who seemed, by a tender pressure of the hand, whose trembling was perceptible to him, to seek to calm the agitation of which he himself partook.

Hyacinthe certainly felt calmer and happier than she had ever done before at Avondale Castle; but still tears of sorrow rose to her eyes when she remembered the young and lovely mother who was now in her untimely and much-dreaded grave. She was about to visit the church, where in the cold, dark vault rested all that remained of one whose happiness had been in luxury: here was laid the mouldering form of her whose pride had been perishable beauty, and those riches, of

which all that now availed to the short-lived worldling was the escutcheoned coffin which held her inanimate dust ! It was an awful and afflicting lesson ; but the agitated Hyacinthe then thought of the last scene of the existence of her mother with a composing satisfaction, and prayed with inward but intense fervour that she was received by God as a truly penitentsinner, although indeed she came to Him for pardon but at the ‘ eleventh hour.’

On entering the pew, to which they had access by a private door, Hyacinthe sunk on her knees in pious prayer. But what voice was it that startled her in her meditations ?—what well-known accents met her ear, when, as if in accordance with the subject of her meditations, the clergyman commenced the service with the words, ‘ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit : a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise !’

Hyacinthe hastily rose, and, going forward in the pew, looked anxiously towards the reading-desk, where she beheld her dear friend, the pious instructor of her early years,—the venerated Mr. Neville ! Softened and saddened by the reflections which had previously filled her mind, the unexpected sight filled her bosom with emotion,

and she cast her eyes towards Lord Avondale to seek some explanation of the occurrence. His were beaming with tenderness on herself; and inwardly he felt most happy that the surprise should in a measure disturb the mournful thoughts, which, from the peculiar character of her mind, he had felt sure would be created by her first visit to the holy edifice where rested the marble sepulchre of her mother. The eyes of Hyacinthe were again turned towards Mr. Neville whose voice faltered in a slight degree as his regard met hers; but he instantly recovered, and he proceeded with the service in his usual impressive manner.

The sermon explained to our heroine the mystery of Mr. Neville's appearance at Avondale. He addressed his congregation for the first time, and presented himself as their future rector. His discourse was most eloquent and touching; and tears were drawn from the eyes of many of the congregation. As for Hyacinthe, hers flowed in torrents; but they were tears of joy, of gratitude, and surprise.

At the conclusion of the service she was conducted by her father into the arms of Mrs. Villars, who was waiting for her in the porch; and in a moment she found herself in the Rectory, which

was adjoining the church, pressed alternately to the bosom of her two kind friends.

The history of all this happiness was briefly thus. The living of Avondale became vacant a few months before ; and it was Lord Avondale's earnest wish, both on his own account and Hyacinthe's, to present it to Mr. Neville. For this purpose he visited Fairbrook, and, in the kindest and most delicate way, besought his acceptance of it.

No expense or pains had been spared to make their new abode delightful, and indeed it was a lovely spot. What joy—what happiness did these arrangements insure to Hyacinthe ! How could she be sufficiently grateful to her considerate parent ?—‘Only,’ she exclaimed, with fervour, pressing his hand again and again to her lips, ‘by devoting my life to you, and by making your pleasure my first and dearest care.’

Hyacinthe is so happy now, that it is a favourable opportunity of allowing the curtain to fall on her and her delighted friends. However, trusting she has excited some little interest in the minds of my young readers, for their gratification we will just take a little peep into her maturer years, and add,—that our amiable heroine had a long life of happiness—that she was the joy

and comfort of Lord Avondale's old age, the pride and delight of the good rector and his sister, and the solace and blessing of her adopted mother.

Hyacinthe shone no less brightly in her character of wife and mother ; and was rewarded by finding an excellent husband in the son of Lord Greville.

It was new life and existence to the good Mrs. Wilmot, when she held in her arms another little ' May ;' for so was named our heroine's first child. ' Mother' was the endearing name by which the excellent woman was called by the children of ' her child,' as she still fondly styled the Lady Hyacinthe Mansfield ; and in superintending these dear charges she felt she had something to live for : and she was indeed loved by them and their gentle mother with an affection at once tender and enduring.

And now, my readers, farewell. I trust that my Hyacinthe may be as kindly received as her predecessor, ' Alice Seymour ;' and that her life may offer amusement as well as instruction to those who peruse these pages. I have essayed in this Tale, as in my first, to make it a practical lesson ; and to shew that a deep sense of religion

will alone gild the path of life with permanent brightness ; and that the measure of happiness enjoyed by rational beings, even in this world, depends more upon their personal qualities—upon the principles, habits, and dispositions they cultivate, than upon external circumstances ; and that no course of life can be safe or satisfactory which is pursued without reference to God. I seek not to prove that riches and prosperity are not good, or that sickness and suffering are not evils ; but I would wish to shew that both may be sanctified, and each state rendered subservient to the glory of Him who dispenses both good and evil. Only let us ‘ watch and pray,’ and trust in Him ; let us earnestly implore the assistance of His Holy Spirit, that we may be enabled temperately to enjoy, and meekly to suffer, all that is decreed by His will ; thus insuring to ourselves a strong, constant, and sustaining sense of His protecting goodness and unfailing wisdom. Then, whether our path lead amidst sunny pastures or through the barren wilderness, we shall perceive that a heavenly arm directs, and a heavenly smile invites, us to press forward in well-doing, even through storms and darkness, to that pure region where all is cloudless and serene.

THE END.







